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# **JESUS CHRIST: HIS LIFE AND WORK.**



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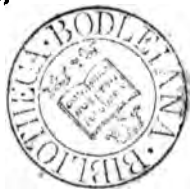
**His Life and Work.**

BY

E. DE PRESSENSÉ, D.D.

TRANSLATED BY

ANNIE HARWOOD,



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## PREFACE,

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THIS popular edition of my *Life of Christ* differs from the work which I published nearly a year ago (and which in eight months reached its third edition), by the absence of all that was purely scientific. It appeared to me desirable in this edition, which addresses itself to readers of the most various classes, to avoid, as far as possible, all debateable and controversial points. I hope that in this new form, this book, in which I have embodied my most cherished convictions, will meet with a wide circulation.

The success of the larger edition has given me a most encouraging assurance of the extent to which interest in religious questions has been re-awakened among us.

E. DE PRESSENSÉ.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS.

---

INTRODUCTION	...	...	...	...	...	...	PAGE I—13
--------------	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	--------------

## *PREPARATION OF JESUS FOR HIS WORK.*

### CHILDHOOD OF JESUS.

- I. Birth of Jesus Christ, year of Rome 750.—Anticipations of the great event—Vision of Zacharias—The Annunciation—Miraculous conception of Jesus—Song of Mary—Birth of John the Baptist—First Census in Judæa—Journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem—Birth of Jesus Christ—The Shepherds ... 17—29
- II. The Childhood of Jesus.—The Presentation—Adoration of the Magi—The Star—Massacre of the Children—Childhood of Jesus at Nazareth—The Child Jesus and the Doctors of the Temple—Development of Jesus ... 29—36

### JOHN THE BAPTIST.—BAPTISM OF JESUS CHRIST.

- I. Preparation and first preachings of the Forerunner:—John the Baptist the new Elias—Preparation of John the Baptist for his Mission—John the Baptist in the Desert of Judæa—Preaching of John the Baptist—Baptism of the Forerunner—Effects of his Preaching—His Humility ... 37—50
- II. *Baptism of Jesus Christ*, year of Rome 780 ... 50—53

III. John the Baptist and Herod Antipas.—Fresh Testimony of John the Baptist to Jesus—John the Baptist and Herod—Doubts of John the Baptist—Testimony of Jesus to John the Baptist	PAGE 53—56
--	---------------

## THE TEMPTATION.

The Temptation in the Wilderness—Jesus conqueror over temptation	... .. 57—65
--	--------------

*FIRST PERIOD OF THE MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST.*

PUBLIC MINISTRY OF JESUS, FROM HIS BAPTISM TO HIS RETURN TO GALILEE AFTER THE FEAST OF PURIM, YEAR OF ROME 780, 781.

Three Periods of the Ministry of Jesus—Unity of His Ministry	... .. 69—72
I. Political condition of Judæa	... .. 72—77
II. Commencement of the Ministry of Jesus.—The first Disciples—First Miracle of Jesus—Jesus drives out the sellers from the Temple—Conversation with Nicodemus—Jesus passes through Samaria	... .. 77—87
III. Return of Jesus into Galilee. Meeting with the Samaritan woman. First public preaching.—Jesus in the Synagogue at Nazareth	... .. 87—93
IV. The Feast of Purim at Jerusalem. Healing of the Paralytic. Apologetic Discourse	... .. 94—97

## MINISTRY OF JESUS IN GALILEE DURING THE TIME OF PUBLIC FAVOUR.

I. General character of the Ministry of Jesus in Galilee. Early Miracles and early public Discourses in that country.—Call of the Disciples—Lake of Tiberias—Christ's manner of life—One of the days of Jesus—Healing of a Leper—Time of public favour—Discontent of the Pharisees	... 98—112
II. Choice of the Twelve Apostles	... .. 112—117

## CONTENTS.

ix

	PAGE
III. Sermon <del>on</del> the Mount.—The Beatitudes—The Law ... ..	117—123

### PREPARATION FOR THE CRISIS IN GALILEE.

- I. Sojourn at Nain.—Raising of the Widow's Son—The Sinner of Nain—Compassion of Jesus for the despised—Parable of the Prodigal Son ... .. 124—128
- II. Various Parables and Miracles.—Parables relating to the kingdom of God—The Demoniac of Gadara—Raising of Jairus' Daughter—First Mission of the Apostles ... .. 129—137

### THE CRISIS OF FAITH IN GALILEE.

- I. The Multiplication of the Loaves at Bethsaida Julias.—The Tempest on the Lake—Discourse at Capernaum ... .. 138—147

## PERIOD OF CONFLICT.

### JOURNEY INTO THE LANDS OF THE NORTH. FROM THE SPRING OF THE YEAR OF ROME 782 TO THE AUTUMN OF THE SAME YEAR.

- I. First proceedings of the Pharisees in Galilee.—Journey to Tyre and Sidon ... .. 151—156
- II. Journey into the lands of the North.—The Woman of Canaan.—Journey to Cæsarea Philippi—Peter's great confession—"Thou art Peter"—The Transfiguration—Healing of the Demoniac Boy—Various Exhortations—The Lord's Prayer ... .. 156—166

### SOJOURN AT JERUSALEM ON THE OCCASION OF THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES. AUTUMN OF YEAR OF ROME 782.

- I. Attitude of Jesus during the Feast.—Discourse of Jesus—Discussion with the Members of the Sanhedrim—Healing of the Man born Blind—Inquiry of the Sanhedrim—The Good Shepherd and the Hireling ... .. 167—182



## CONTENTS.

LAST SOJOURN IN GALILEE. SOLEMN RETURN TO JERUSALEM  
THROUGH SAMARIA. FEAST OF THE DEDICATION.  
FROM OCTOBER TO DECEMBER, 782.

	PAGE
I. Last Sojourn in Galilee.—The duty of Charity— Mission of the Seventy—Surrender of Earthly Possessions—Characteristic Sayings of Jesus ...	183—197
II. Return to Jerusalem through Samaria. Feast of the Dedication ... ..	197—200

SOJOURN IN PERÆA. THE FAMILY OF BETHANY.  
RESURRECTION OF LAZARUS.

I. Sojourn in Peræa.—Words of Jesus on the ques- tion of Divorce—The Rich Young Man—Law of Renunciation—Compensation for Sacrifices— Jesus Blesses little Children ... ..	201—207
II. Resurrection of Lazarus.—Deliberations of the Sanhedrim ... ..	207—215

## THE GREAT WEEK.

DEPARTURE FOR THE FEAST. THE JOURNEY. JERICHO.  
THE SUPPER AT BETHANY. TRIUMPHAL ENTRY.

I. Journey to Jericho.—Healing of Blind Bartimæus —Jesus at the house of Zaccheus—Parable of the Talents ... ..	219—225
II. The Adoration of Mary of Bethany.—Indignation of Judas ... ..	225—229
III. Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem.—The Barren Fig-tree cursed ... ..	230—235

THE DAY OF CAPTIOUS QUESTIONS.

I. Attempt of the Pharisees to ensnare Jesus—His Reply—Attempt of the Sadducees—Jesus' Reply— Indignant words of the Master—Denunciation of Pharisaism—Jesus and the Greek Proselytes —Jesus troubled in spirit—Voice from Heaven — <i>The Widow's Mite</i> ... ..	236—256
---	---------

# CONTENTS.

xi

	PAGE
II. The Great Prophetic Discourse. Parables enjoining Watchfulness ... ..	256—259

## THE SCENES IN THE UPPER CHAMBER.

I. The Preparation for the Passover. The Last Supper.—Character of the Jewish Passover—Jesus washes His Disciples' feet—The Traitor is pointed out—The Lord's Supper ... ..	260—267
II. Warnings and Consolations. The Sacerdotal Prayer... ..	268—275

## THE PASSION.

I. Gethsemane.—The Arrest—First Trial—Jesus in the house of Annas—Peter's Denial—Jesus before the Sanhedrim ... ..	276—282
II. Jesus before Pilate—Jesus before Herod Antipas Return to the Prætorium—Condemnation of Jesus	282—287
III. The Execution ... ..	288—301

## RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I. The Facts.—First Appearances—Peter and John at the Sepulchre—Interview of Jesus with Mary Magdalene— <i>Noli me tangere</i> —The Disciples at Emmaus—Jesus appears in the Upper Chamber—Doubts of Thomas—Jesus shows Himself by the Lake of Tiberias—Second appearance in Galilee—The Ascension ... ..	301—314
CONCLUSION ... ..	315—320



## Introduction.



ONE of the blessed signs of the present day is that eager desire for education which is so wide-spread, especially among the working classes. No surer means could these desire for obtaining and securing their true enfranchisement.

It is ignorance which makes the masses of the people a blind brute force, a terrible element in the life of a nation, at the sway of passing influences changeable as the winds. Education makes a people self-contained and self-governing. It teaches that the only intelligent power is that which can command itself, and that the real ascendancy of man consists not in the display of the largest possible amount of strength, but in the right and rational direction of the strength possessed. The man who governs *himself* asserts his high prerogative of

25

mind ; the man who is driven by his own strong passions, like the wave before the tempest, is but a barbarian still.

We must beware, however, of thinking that education alone will suffice for this vast work of man's moral elevation, and that evil will infallibly flee before the light of reason as the wild beast flees before the dawn. To *know* is not always to *do*. The heart is not necessarily governed by the understanding, and from the heart spring the issues of life. It is needful, then, that with the light which enlightens the intellect, there be also fire to warm and purify the heart. This is the great mission of that sun of the spiritual world which we call religion, and from which so many of our contemporaries turn away contemptuously in the name of progress. Could they succeed in leading the present generation in their own footsteps, they would see what would be the issue of a democracy without God ; and of what avail would be the most wide-spread knowledge of mere material facts, when men had ceased to have any regard for the great primary truth, which connects earth with heaven and the present hour with our immortal destinies. With head bowed earthward like the brute's, man would no longer lift on high an eye brightened with the light of a far-reaching hope ; shut up within a contracted and earth-bound sphere, he would give himself wholly to the pursuit of present pleasure ; having lost faith in the law which commands respect

for others, or, at any rate, having lost faith in its eternal sanctions, he would make a mock of duty, and trample under foot obligations that fettered him, forgetting that the right of his neighbour was the guarantee of his own right, and that in violating justice towards a brother, he was throwing away his own shield of defence. Social bonds would not outlive the bonds of religion, and a relapse into utter barbarism would be the last step of this so-called progress. The world would be the prey of successful might and victorious iniquity; despotism would know no check, and servility no bounds.

It is asserted indeed that morality can exist without belief in a God, and that respect for humanity is an instinct of the heart which guarantees all lawful rights. As a matter of fact, however, I cannot see that the times in which the thought of God has grown feeble, have ever been distinguished by respect for human nature. Look for example at that Roman world, in which the most cynical impiety was coincident with the most hateful tyranny. Heaven appeared void, and the chains of universal slavery were but the heavier and more firmly riveted. Men believed in no god worthy of the name, but they believed firmly in the god Cæsar. The first effectual resistance offered to this despotism, which is the deepest shame of history, came from a few obscure disciples of a despised and persecuted religion. They refused to burn incense before the impure *idol*, throned on the Mount Palatine.

For their refusal they were thrown into dungeons and to wild beasts; they were sacrificed by thousands; but their bodies only could perish. The truth for which they died was not extinguished with the embers of the sacrifice; it leaped up from their ashes, a pure and deathless flame! Rome found herself at issue with a new power, such as she had not yet encountered in the vast empire brought beneath her yoke. This unknown force was a good conscience towards God; and against this, the weapons of a carnal warfare were useless. The man who believes in God, who knows that he has been made in God's image, and saved by His love, guards his dignity and moral independence as a sacred deposit; he will yield to no earthly power, that which he is bound to keep for the Sovereign of his soul. If, in his turn, power is placed at his disposal, he will respect in his brother that which he asks to have respected in himself, for he will recognise in the humblest of his fellows, a beam of the same divine light which lightens his own spirit. Quench that celestial spark, and you will have but senseless clay, which you can mould at will, and which will take any impress.

It will doubtless be objected that religion has more than once oppressed the conscience, and become itself a bitter persecutor. I admit it; but let it be observed that in every wrong perpetrated in the name of religion by its unworthy representatives, there has been a flagrant deviation from its true principles.

It was not from her Founder that the Church, in evil days learned to wield the sword of tyranny, for Christ declared, "they who take the sword shall perish by the sword;" and to His disciples, when they desired to call down fire from heaven upon a city of the Samaritans which would not receive Him, He said, "Ye know not what spirit ye are of." If there be one thing which we would repudiate, even more strongly than a morality without religion, it is a religion without morality, a religion which, under pretext of serving God, tramples on human rights, and insults the human conscience.

Wherever, on the other hand, religion is faithful to its origin and to its mission, and is kept free from admixtures foreign to its nature, we find that the most enlarged and liberal souls and societies, —those which not only maintain their independence towards others, but impose on themselves the truest respect for right, and obedience to law,—are also those most deeply imbued with Christian principles.

The great question now pending for contemporary democracy on this side the Atlantic, is whether it will be able to battle with the strong current carrying it on to the fatal rock of Materialism. This question is of far greater moment than any affecting even the highest temporal interests. That which is at stake is the moral dignity of every soul of man. Our brow crimson as we hear it said on all sides, that the *moment is come* when the positive sciences



demand the concentration of every faculty, and that the only means of making progress in real knowledge is to lend exclusive attention to material facts. What! shall everything which does not come within the lower order of things—the noble contemplation of the ideal, the thirst for the infinite, the desire after first principles—shall all this be counted but a chimera in the eyes of the vulgar wisdom of our day? Is there nothing positive and real, but that which comes under our immediate observation? “Bound your researches,” it is said, “by the limits defined by science. ‘Hitherto shall you come and no further.’” And why no further? If this narrow circle of the finite is to be the limit of my being, why this conception of the Infinite within me, this aspiration after the Divine and the Invisible, which is not a dream born of my sickly brain, but is the noble and immortal madness of mankind? No human being, on any spot of earth, has ever for one day been satisfied with this short span of thought, to which the philosophers of our day would condemn us. The universality and permanence of the religious instinct is thus a positive fact, which has been the parent, in history, of results so momentous, that a philosophy which pretends to give us the *rationale* of all things, is bound to render us some account of these.

Blessed indeed is science when it increases and assures the victories of mind over matter, when it triumphs over time and space, and by a quivering

chain, flung athwart the depths of ocean, binds together two continents and gives them a common life. But what right has science, in the name of achievements so marvellous, to sever the mysterious link which binds not one continent to another, but our whole world to a world higher and divine? This bond is more precious and more lasting than any Transatlantic cable, for it is riveted in the profoundest depths of the human spirit. No winds troubling the surface have power to break it; the counter currents, the swelling and surging of which make us afraid, because these only directly meet our eye, cannot touch the deep indestructible faith of mankind. Conscience holds fast just that which science, falsely so called, would destroy. Let but one sigh ascend from a soul seeking after God, and the whole edifice of scientific materialism crumbles to the ground.

Oh for a mightier voice to speak to the masses of the people so cruelly misled! Fain would I cry to them, "Put not your trust in these miserable teachers of a miserable creed, who counsel you to keep your gaze perpetually earthwards, because to-morrow your dust will mingle with the dust out of which you sprang." A noble prospect forsooth, and one well calculated to enhance, as they pretend, your moral dignity! Nay, rather listen to the voice of that lofty sadness, that sacred sorrow, which so many times has filled your heart, even when work was plentiful, and *your children's table* wanted not for bread.

Believe in those higher impulses, which carry you beyond the present moment, in that divine instinct which lifts your heart upward to the Great Father in heaven. Believe in the prayer of your little child, whose hands fold themselves almost unbidden, and who speaks the name of God as naturally as your own, because it is graven on his young heart as on a blank unwritten page.

But suppose you could block up the window in your house which opens towards heaven, what would you have gained? What would remain to you would be but a beaver's hut, which, however well built, could never be the dwelling designed for an immortal spirit. When you shall have solved all those questions of social and political economy, which so lawfully engage your attention; when the principle of association shall be fully worked out, and perfected by co-operation, do not dream that then the end of your destiny will be attained. None will rejoice more truly than we in all that elevates your condition, and tends to realise the equality of right among all classes of society. But our ambition aims higher still; we will not admit that to attain social elevation you are called upon to lower yourselves in the nobler sphere of your being, and that in becoming citizens of a higher order, better taught, better clothed, better fed, you must needs abandon that kingly, or rather divine sonship, which religion declares to be the right of every creature made in the image of God. Upon

you, as upon every man, there is the seal of a double royal anointing: on your brow you bear the sign of your august origin, and upon each one of you has fallen a drop of the blood of Christ, for the redemption of your souls. We would jealously guard for you, as for ourselves, this noble prerogative, and we will not suffer it to be snatched away in the name of a false enfranchisement.

The true deliverer of our race is that Jesus, whom false teachers seek to characterise as a pale and powerless figure of the past, the representative of a religion doomed to death, which is fading out of the horizon of humanity as a dream dissolves at daybreak; and yet no power is so fresh and living as the power of His name to those who have learned to know Him as He appears in the simple and touching story of His disciples. He is represented now as a mild, effeminate Christ, who repels men of mind and power; or, as a kind of irascible pope, demanding an unworthy subservience; and the religion He founded is stigmatised as fit only for an age of barbarism. But if from this Christ of human invention you turn to the Christ of the Gospel, you will find the reverse of all these misconceptions, which arise not from the progress of science, but from the shameful religious ignorance which prevails among us. You will then recognise the manly strength which blends itself in Christ with infinite goodness. You will see how that pitying love, which has *tenderness and healing* for every form of suffer-

ing, can transform itself, if need be, into burning indignation, striking the proud sinner like a hot thunder-bolt, tearing away his mask of hypocrisy, and branding him with well-deserved ignominy. This friend of the lowly, who found His home by the poor man's hearth, never flattered even the poor man, and while He freely offered to him the divine treasures of His grace, nevertheless showed him unsparingly his prejudices, his superstitions and his sins. He, whose word was sweeter than honey and the honeycomb to hungry souls, and distilled like balm upon broken hearts, was the unshrinking witness for truth. He was neither to be moved by the menaces of power, nor won by the seductions of popularity, and therefore his end was the cross. All human heroism pales before His sacrifice. He died to deliver souls, and never was moral freedom more gloriously asserted than on that day of His agony. Therefore I challenge you to fix but one earnest, loyal gaze on the Crucified, and then to turn away from Him, if you can, with indifference and contempt. The light of perfect holiness shines forth from the depths of that outer darkness; beholding it, the proud man falls upon his knees, and from trembling lips bursts the cry of the strong centurion, "Surely this was the Son of God."

This is more than a sublime spectacle, more than the realisation of the highest ideal of humanity. This holy Victim is the sacrifice by which the world is redeemed. In His death is the great

reparation for human rebellion, the satisfaction of eternal justice. Conscience has never ceased to cry aloud for this reparation, which should declare the righteousness of God. If pardon is held out to it on other terms, it cannot accept it. Bring all other doctrines to the test, and you will find that none avails to heal and purify the heart. It is easy to scorn the scheme of redemption ; it is not easy to find a substitute for it ; and those who reject it as legendary, only do so in sickening bewilderment of soul over the vast woes of humanity which need to be redressed. Any one who has sounded the depth of human depravity, in spite of the good which still mingles with the evil, the glory with the shame, will not marvel that if there is in heaven a God free and mighty to act, this God should have had pity on us in our low estate, and have manifested His love in a measure equal to our misery. I admit it is amazing that the Most High should have given his Son for mankind, to raise the fallen race in His own person ; but is it not of the very essence of devotion to surpass and confound all calculation ? It would have been strange indeed if we could have comprehended the love of God, and if infinite compassion had come within the bounds of our feeble understanding. The cross is foolishness because it is the one immeasurable sacrifice. The supernatural is neither more natural nor more chimerical than the love which stops not short of self-immolation. Shall it be said that the Most High cannot, with due

regard to the immutability of the laws of nature, hold out a helping hand to me when I have fallen? Then I have a better life than He, for I have a father's heart, and I would not suffer one of my children to perish without help. Grant only that God is almighty and all-merciful, and the supernatural follows as a necessary consequence. If He *can* work miracles, I am certain that He will, if miracles are necessary to the salvation of His creatures. Either say that He is not the Sovereign of the universe, or that "whatever is, is best," upon our earth. You will thus escape the difficulty of the miracles, but it will be to accept an anomaly doubly great. Let us cleave to the truth. Let us admit, that for misery such as ours, there was needed such a miracle of help as we find recorded in the Gospel.

I have only touched on these great problems, the weightiest which can engage the mind of man. I wished to protest against that sort of proscription, under which they suffer in these days of positivism and self-sufficient morality. May this little book, in which I endeavour to present, in its true setting, the likeness of Jesus Christ, as I trace its outlines in the Gospels, find access to that great public which cannot remain for ever satisfied with the insipid or unhealthy literature so abundantly provided for it.

Men, bowed over your task of honest labour; women, fulfilling patiently and quietly your appointed work, we will not say to you, with a celebrated writer,

"Come to the feast which a smiling God has prepared for the simple-hearted."<sup>1</sup> No ; we show you not a smiling Christ, but a Saviour, who has wept with your tears, bent under your burdens, and whose name is the Man of Sorrows. Rich or poor, learned or ignorant, this is He whom we need. My most cherished wish will be fulfilled if I can awaken in my readers the desire to know Him better, and if this feeble copy, taken from the Gospel, may lead them to the Divine original.

<sup>1</sup> M. Renan, in the Introduction to his book, entitled *Jesus*.





**Preparation of Jesus**

**for**

**His Work.**



## CHILDHOOD OF JESUS.

### I. Birth of Jesus Christ, Year of Rome, 750.

ON the eve of a great religious event, souls are stirred by strange presentiments. It is thus that, in Judæa—bowed down and groaning under the Idumæan Herod—the hope of Messiah manifests itself everywhere with singular vitality. While the mass of the nation is given up to ardent visions of vengeance and glory, a purer faith is found in all ranks of the people, and under the most various conditions. Voices which wake echoes in all parts of the country, declare with confidence that the time of fulfilment is at hand; they are heard at Jerusalem,<sup>1</sup> under the shadow of the Temple, close to those schools in which religion is nothing more than a barren science; they reverberate in Samaria, where men talk together of the prophet like unto Moses, promised in Deuteronomy.<sup>2</sup> Judging from the success of the early ministry of John the Baptist and of Jesus Christ in Galilee, these expectations appear to have been very general in that province, which was called disdainfully “Galilee of the Gentiles,” because it had been always less strictly

<sup>1</sup> See Luke ii. 25.    <sup>2</sup> John iv. 19; Deut. xviii. 18.

closed against foreigners than the other parts of Palestine. Not from this province came illustrious rabbis and men of power; it was far removed from all that agitated Jerusalem, but, for that very reason, it was more accessible to enlarged ideas. Far from offering to its inhabitants an asylum of exceptional tranquillity, this province had been the theatre of great political and religious agitation. It was on the shores of the Lake of Gennesareth, under the humble roof of poor, ignorant fishermen, that the expectation of Messiah had been preserved in greatest purity. There the voice of ancient prophets was not drowned in that of doctors of Pharisaic tradition; it retained its power in the midst of the grand serenity of nature; there the piety of mothers kindled that of sons; there grew up those who were to become, subsequently, St. Peter and St. John. The tremor of expectation was communicated even to the pagan world, especially in the countries bordering on Judæa.<sup>1</sup> As the proximity of an unknown land is told by breezes which have swept across it, so was there, mingling with the atmosphere of the times, a breath from the new shores which the human soul was approaching.

To aspiration there came soon a response of positive revelation. For many centuries no new prophet had arisen; hence there was a bitter consciousness of decline in the midst of that rigid orthodoxy and faithful observance of the law, on which men so prided themselves at Jerusalem. In vain might Herod

<sup>1</sup> See Matt. ii. 1.

lavish on the building of the Temple all the resources of an advanced civilisation; marble and gold could not make *that* other than an empty monument, in which the presence of God was no more revealed. "The dew of blessing falls not on us, and our fruits are tasteless," exclaimed Rabbi Simeon, the son of Gamaliel. The heavens must needs open again to fertilise the parched ground, and to inaugurate a new era of moral fruitfulness. It was in the Temple that the long silence of the Divine voice was at length broken.

Among the pious Jews of these times was a priest of the name of Zacharias, of the family of Abia, one of those four-and-twenty sacerdotal courses instituted by David to attend to the worship of God by rotation during one week.<sup>1</sup> Living in retirement, he, with his wife Elizabeth, had kept the faith of the ancient days, and being childless, he had known the sharpest trial that could visit a believing Israelite, who looked upon each new-born infant as possibly the child of promise. The holy city and the Temple had preserved for him their sacred character; thus, when his turn came to officiate for the people, his prayer ascended to heaven with the incense that he burnt before the altar, and bore with it a yearning sigh for the deliverance of Israel. "Just as the muse visits only the poet, so does inspiration descend only into the heart prepared for it." This beautiful saying finds confirmation in the story of Zacharias. As he was

<sup>1</sup> See 1 Chron. xxiv.

fulfilling his office, he was honoured with a celestial vision. The angel Gabriel appeared to him on the right side of the altar; he told him that his aged wife should be no longer barren, and that this second Sarah should give to the world a son consecrated to a glorious mission. "He shall go before the Lord God in the spirit and power of Elias, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."<sup>1</sup> Filled with wonder and awe, Zacharias doubts, for a moment, the power of God; he is struck with dumbness till the day when his tongue shall be unloosed to magnify the blessed confusion of his passing incredulity. His stay before the altar was prolonged beyond the customary time; the people were uneasy at the delay, for an accident occurring at such a time to one of the priests would have been taken as an omen of evil. Suddenly Zacharias appears, pale with the solemn awe which takes possession of a man brought into contact with the invisible world. His enforced silence, his speechless gestures, all reveal that he has been the witness of a mysterious vision.

Six months later a similar scene was enacted, not now in the capital of Judaism, in the magnificent Temple, and by the altar of incense, but in the heart of Galilee, in a little city called Nazareth, which lay buried in obscurity. There a young virgin, named Mary, was living a humble life in the home of a workman; she was betrothed to one of her relatives, poor like herself, and earning his bread by the sweat of his

<sup>1</sup> Luke i. 17, 18.

brow : this was the carpenter Joseph. And yet this virgin was a daughter of the kings of her people ; she belonged directly to the seed royal, and could fairly claim David as her ancestor.

We are ignorant of the circumstances under which the most illustrious of Jewish families had sunk into this low state, and had been led to settle so far from its original home.

But poor and unknown as was the virgin of Nazareth, she was nevertheless the one, "blessed among women," who was to be the mother of the Lord. It is not needful to borrow the unreal colours of legend in order to call up before the mind that ideal type of purity, truth and artless faith, which the Gospel limner has sketched in a few outlines, so true and tender that Christian art has never been weary of reproducing it on its canvas. Mary is not a sort of divinity born of clouds. She is a true daughter of earth, and the humanity represented in her is that feeble, fallible, suffering thing we know so well, only she represents it in most touching humility and most assured faith. In this virgin heart the long-drawn aspiration of mankind—uttered as a deep plaint among the noblest of the heathen, as a glorious oracle in Hebrew prophecy—becomes the pure and perfect expression of the desire after salvation. Mary appears on the old stem of Judaism, like the flower on the tree, marking the season of maturity. Let us encircle her with no other halo than that *glorious hope*, which flashes out in her



song after the annunciation, and leave unlifted that veil of heavenly modesty in which she enwraps herself when she learns her high destiny, and of which she is never divested. Poetry has no more beautiful creation than the scene of the annunciation. Far are we from thence concluding the relation to be a myth. Why treat as chimerical all which passes the limit of vulgar prose? May we not suppose the ideal and the real meeting in the Divine plan? As a great thinker has said, when Jesus Christ comes into the world, it is the Divine ideal becoming a human reality.

The holy tremor of Mary, her simple and confiding acceptance of her amazing destiny, her journey to the hill country of Judæa, to mingle her joy with that of her cousin Elizabeth; the first interview in which the two mothers confide to each other their hopes,—these features of Luke's narrative are fresh in every memory. The song of the virgin, as indeed all the utterances of the same nature preserved in the Gospels, retains the character of the poetry of the Old Testament: we find in it both the form and spirit of the old sacred lyric. Hebrew prophecy, in its last manifestation, is like Elizabeth, who feels the babe leap in her bosom, so soon as she sees the mother of the Lord. The future about to be revealed quivers, as it were, beneath the tissue of pregnant symbols, like a bud ready to burst. Mary's whole nature flows out in the "Magnificat," full of fervent gratitude and deep humility.

"My soul doth magnify the Lord,  
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour;  
For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden :  
For behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed ;  
For he that is mighty hath magnified me, and holy is his name ;  
And his mercy is on them that fear him, from generation to generation.

He hath showed strength with his arm ;  
He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts ;  
He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree :  
He hath filled the hungry with good things, but the rich he hath sent empty away."

These words are like a foreshadowing of the first of the beatitudes: "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Nothing can better show that we have reached the point of contact between God and man, than the fact that the last utterance of the old covenant is the opening word of the Gospel.

None of all the great prophets has expressed a firmer hope of Messiah than this daughter of Abraham, recalling, on the eve of its actual accomplishment, the first of the promises made to the father of her people.

"He hath holpen his servant Israel,  
In remembrance of his mercy,  
As he spake to our fathers,  
To Abraham and his seed for ever."

Hardly had the virgin returned to her native town, when Elizabeth brought into the world the child so long waited for, *who was to be John the Baptist.*

Zacharias recovered his speech; the breath of inspiration touched the lips which had been mute for so many months. As if the better to mark the religious significance of this birth, the father is merged in the prophet. He regards it, first of all, as the precursive sign of the great event which was about to be accomplished for the salvation of the world. His horizon is not wider than that of his contemporaries; he rejoices in the thought that Israel shall be "delivered from the hand of her enemies;"<sup>1</sup> but this deliverance will be a work of mercy; its result will be the re-establishment of holiness and righteousness, "and the remission of sins."<sup>2</sup> It is only after having thus first spoken of Messiah, that Zacharias describes in these beautiful words the mission of his son: "And thou, child, shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways."<sup>3</sup> This prophetic psalm winds up with an image of truest poetry. The coming salvation is represented as "the dayspring from on high,"—the celestial morning which is to break upon the darkness of the world.

Mary was the betrothed of Joseph: the form of the latter is but faintly outlined in the Gospel history. Nothing is less like the methods of fable than the account of his scruples when he learns the condition of his future wife. Apprised in a dream of the mystery which he had taken for her shame, he does not hesitate to marry Mary, for he knows

<sup>1</sup> Luke i. 71.<sup>2</sup> Luke i. 74-7.<sup>3</sup> Luke i. 76.

that the child she bears shall "save his people from their sins." He was awaiting the event when an unforeseen circumstance led him to the little town of Bethlehem, whence originally he came.

King Herod was reaching the term of his long career, in which his successes were numbered by his crimes. The old despot owed the throne only to the favour of Augustus; thus he showed himself as servile towards Rome as he was implacable to the Jews; it was not likely, at a moment when his failing powers warned him that he must take his last stroke of policy by assuring his power to his children, that he would refuse to lend himself to any desire or whim of his all-powerful protector. Now Augustus had begun just at this time to take a census of his empire; he wished to obtain an exact statement of the resources of each province, according to positive evidence; he included in this enrolment, the allied kingdoms which were in reality dependent on his authority; only, according to the ancient and wise policy of Rome, he permitted a compliance in form with the usages of the country. Nothing then need prevent our supposing a first census in Judæa, made conformably to the Jewish customs, which took account rather of a man's birthplace than of his residence. Herod was not the man to refuse Augustus a satisfaction so unimportant as this, or to assert the independence of Judæa; it is well known how ready he ever was to sacrifice such considerations, when his own interests were concerned. This first

census preceded the more general one which took place some years later under Cyrenius, who was the governor, after Syria had been reduced to a Roman province. It was thus a political measure, entirely foreign to any religious consideration, which led Joseph and Mary to the city of David. The Jewish law laid no obligation on a woman to undertake such a journey, for the writing of her name was enough; but who can wonder at the young wife, situated like Mary, accompanying her protector? Beside, she knew as well as the scribes the prophecy which pointed out Bethlehem as the city of Messiah.

From Nazareth to Bethlehem is about four days' journey, especially for a poor family without any vehicle at command, and treading on foot the dusty roads of Palestine. After passing the plain of Jezreel and smiling Samaria, the hill country of Judæa, stony and often arid, has to be traversed. Joseph and Mary travelled like poor pilgrims. Thus, on their arrival at Bethlehem, they met with no eager reception, and when they knocked at the door of a humble inn, there was no room for them, as Luke tells us in his simple, touching words. Mary found only a stable for her shelter; and there, not in a cave, as says the legend, the Redeemer was born. "Not only," says Bossuet, "does He seek no human splendours, but to show how little He accounts of such, He places himself at the farthest extreme from them all. Hardly can He find a spot lowly enough to be His birthplace; He meets with a half-fallen

stable, and into this He descends. He accepts all that men shun, all that they fear, all that they despise, all which repels their senses, in order to show how vain and imaginary are to Him all the glories of the world."

This great event, the most momentous in the history of the world — since it divides it into its two great parts, and is the hidden pole towards which gravitate all human destinies — took place as unheeded as the most obscure. No one marked it, except the angels in heaven, and some shepherds who were keeping their flocks on one of the hills which surround Bethlehem. It was at a season of year when the softened temperature sometimes made it needless to lead the sheep into the city at evening time. It was, doubtless, one of those beautiful oriental nights when the heavens proclaim nothing but mercy. These simple men were chosen as the first to receive the good tidings of great joy, because they were waiting for it. Everything in those fields, where the young David, like themselves, had fed his flock, reminded them of the promise made to his race, and they had doubtless read the mysterious oracle, which declared that the very ground they were treading should be the cradle of Messiah. Suddenly the startled air resounds with a mysterious choir; they hear angelic voices, and Divine words proclaim in their ears :

"Glory to God in the highest,  
Peace on earth, good will towards men."

The shepherds believed the things which were spoken. Simple, artless men they were, who had not learnt in the schools at Jerusalem only to admit as possible such forms and measures of mercy as a Pharisee could comprehend. They deemed it not strange—and we are at one with them—that angels, man's elder brothers, dwellers in a purer region where evil had not come, should celebrate with their sweetest songs, such an event as the birth of the Redeemer.

Bethlehem is built on a little hill; it is surrounded with lesser hills, which seem to rise in regular gradations, and do not shut in the horizon. Beyond these graduated heights, a soft and yet striking landscape stretches away to the mountains of Moab and the steppes of the Dead Sea. The shepherds were encamped on one of those lovely meadows, planted with olive and fig trees, which may still be seen; from thence they set out in haste to the town, and in a steep and narrow street, they find the holy child wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. They know His glory, and they see His humiliation. In lowly adoration they fall at His feet. These poor men, rich in faith and love, are the first retinue of the King of souls, as the cradle is His first throne. No honour could better become Him, nothing could better show over what kingdom He came to reign. "O! with what majesty does He appear to the spirit," exclaims Pascal. Mary looked on, adoring with trembling so much greatness in so much frailty;

she made of all these memories a sacred treasure, which she "laid up in her heart," to transmit them unbroken to the Church.

## II. The childhood of Jesus.

None of the observances commanded in the Law were neglected for the child Jesus. Assuredly a fictitious history would not have admitted rites, which might seem to deny His original purity, and which were only the signs of His complete incorporation with His people and mankind. Eight days after His birth He was circumcised, and solemnly received that name of Jesus which found in Him alone its full signification. On the fortieth day, after the legal purification of the mother, Joseph and Mary brought Him into the Temple, to present the offering which redeemed from the priesthood every first-born male child of Israel.<sup>1</sup> The rich offered a lamb; the poor two turtledoves. This was the sacrifice of the family of Joseph the carpenter. But that great contrast of humbleness and glory which pervades the whole life of Christ, appears again in this hour. Hardly is the child borne across the threshold of the Temple, when He is hailed by a prophetic voice. The aged Simeon declares that he is now ready to depart in peace, since on his closing eyes has shone the light which is to lighten all nations.<sup>2</sup> Inspiration bears him higher still, and he foretells at what a price this salvation of the world will be purchased. This feeble new-born child shall divide mankind, and

See <sup>1</sup> Levit. xii. 4-6.

<sup>2</sup> Luke ii. 29, 32.



the thoughts of many hearts shall be revealed. He is set apart for many sorrows, and the soul of Mary His mother shall be pierced through with a sword.<sup>1</sup>

The double prophecy of Simeon receives a speedy confirmation after the return of Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, where it would seem they then wished to fix their abode. While the best representatives of the heathen world are bringing him their homage, the life of the child is menaced by the king who is seated on the throne of David. His earthly career opens under this ray of glory and this glare of hate.

Some devotees of the religion of Zoroaster, accustomed to seek in the stars tokens of the future, were drawn from the far East to Palestine by a sidereal appearance, which they interpreted as the confirmation of their highest hopes. The religion of Persia, professed by the Magi, was more accessible than any other Eastern superstition to the idea of a Messiah; human life was not in its creed, as in the pantheism of India, an evil dream, which man must seek to shake off as speedily as possible, either by asceticism or annihilation; it represented life as a real combat between beneficent and maleficent powers; it recognised the intervention of superior beings in our destiny, to effect our deliverance; it believed in godlike heroes, the servants or representatives of Ormuz. Parseeism had become purified by its contact with Judaism since the exile in

<sup>1</sup> Luke ii. 35.

Babylon. There is nothing improbable in the supposition that men like the Magi, belonging to the *élite* of their nation, may have had knowledge of some of the oracles of the Old Testament. Their aspirations were confirmed by what they learnt of the Messiah looked for in Judæa.

“What manner of child shall this be” who attracts so far pilgrims from a strange and heathen land? The time is come when national barriers are about to be thrown down; more than a mere son of David is here, and a kingdom greater than that of Solomon is at hand.

The Magi having been warned in a vision that Herod is only awaiting their tidings to put the Holy Child to death, return privately to their own country; the king, in his wrath, commands the massacre of all the children of two years old and under, in the territory of Bethlehem. Such a crime has been considered improbable, and the silence of historians has been urged against it, as if the murder of a handful of children in a little town might not be lost, in the midst of all the atrocities which stained especially the latter years of the life of Herod. Assuredly, he who had immolated a cherished wife, a brother, and three sons to his jealous suspicions, and who ordered a general massacre for the day of his funeral, so that his body should not be borne to the earth in the midst of universal rejoicing, such a monster would not recoil from a measure so insignificant in his eyes, when the object was to prevent a dangerous explosion

of religious fanaticism. What recks he of the weeping of mothers? A little earth soon stifles that; but it goes up—a terrible cry—to heaven. “In Rama was there a voice heard,” says the Evangelist, quoting from Jeremiah, “Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they were not.”<sup>1</sup> This pathetic personification of the unhappy city is better understood when the traveller sees at its gates, the tomb of the wife of Jacob: the name of Rachel was thus closely linked with Bethlehem.

Joseph and Mary had fled into Egypt, in consequence of a dream in which they had been warned of God of the peril that threatened their child. They remained there only a short time, for Herod died a few weeks after their flight, in the spring of the year 750. Joseph, on his return, left Bethlehem for ever; he feared that the direct heir of Herod might show the same animus as his father. He settled in Galilee, in the town of Nazareth, which had been his abode before the great events of that memorable year had made him desirous of dwelling in the city of David.

Apocryphal literature has evinced a great predilection for this period of the history of Jesus, just because it has been left in the shade by the Gospel.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Matt. ii. 18.

<sup>2</sup> The quotation made by Matthew from Hosea xi. 1, “I have called *my Son* out of Egypt” (ch. ii. 15), applying it to the return of the child Jesus into Judæa, is an example of the freedom with which he searches the Old Testament to find everywhere types and predictions of Messiah; for it is certain

We shall imitate the sacred reserve. It is certain that the childhood of Christ forms no exception to the law of slow and gradual progress. "The child," says Luke, "grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him."<sup>1</sup> Thus did Jesus pass through the obscure period in which thought and consciousness are yet dormant. Evil alone had no growth within Him; nothing tarnished the exquisite purity of His soul. He never for an instant ceased to be one with His Father; His heart opened as spontaneously to the life divine, as His lungs breathed the vital air. Externally, nothing seems to have distinguished Him from other children, at least in the eyes of those who did not, like Mary, lift the veil of humility which concealed His inner life. If it had been otherwise, it would be impossible to explain the persistent unbelief of His kinsfolk and neighbours. He did not assume the prophet, nor ever assert a precocious independence. As a child, He perfectly fulfilled the duties of His age, which may be summed up in submission to the heads of the family. "Thus," says Irenæus, "He sanctified the period of childhood by passing through it."

that the prophet had only reference, in that text, to a past event—the exodus of the people of Israel from Egypt—and not to a future event relating to Christ. We find a still more striking instance of this method of quotation in Matt. ii. 23. It is impossible to find in the Old Testament a text in which the word *Nazarene* is applied to Messiah.

<sup>1</sup> Luke ii. 40.

There is every reason to suppose that He grew up in the workshop of Joseph, and laboured with His own hands. If He attended the elementary schools in which the young Jews were initiated into holy studies, He kept aloof from those of the Rabbis; to frequent these He must have quitted Nazareth; and what would they have taught Him? What had He to do with that scholasticism, the painful framework of which He was to destroy with a breath? His teaching shows how deeply He was versed in the sacred literature of His people; there He found, as it were, His spiritual patrimony; the divine words were the food of His soul, and reached to its very depths. The soft and lovely scenes of nature which surrounded Him were also a holy book, in which He read the name of His Father; He grasped in all its depth the harmony which exists between the revelation of earth and that of heaven. Nazareth is one of the sweetest sites in Palestine. St. Jerome rightly calls it the flower of Galilee, and compares it to a rose opening its corolla. It does not command a landscape like Bethlehem; the girdle of hills which encloses it makes it a calm retreat, the silence of which is still in our day broken by the hammer and chisel of the artisan. The child Jesus grew up in the midst of a thoroughly simple life, in which a soul like His might best develop its harmonies. He had only to climb the surrounding heights, to contemplate one of the finest landscapes of the Holy Land. At His

feet lay the plain of Jezreel, tapestried with myriad flowers, each one more beautiful than Solomon in all his glory. Its boundaries were Tabor and Carmel, whence echoed the voice of Elijah; Lebanon rose on the horizon, and the chain of Hermon confronted with its snowy summits the mountains of Moab, while afar off glimmered the Great Sea, which, outlying all national barriers, seemed to open to Jesus that world which He came to save. Living in communion with nature, He learned to know her well. From her He gathered those expressive illustrations which He afterwards scattered broadcast over His discourses, and which make His parables such fresh and living pictures.

Just as the plant does not open to the sun till it has cast its roots into the soil to a depth not measured by the eye, so Jesus, by secret and intense prayer, drew the sap and life of His soul from the very bosom of God. Some favouring circumstance was all that was needed to strike from Him, before the eyes of all, the spark divine. This was afforded by the journey to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover feast, at the age when the young Jews began to take part publicly in the religious life of their people. This solemn visit to the Temple filled the soul of Jesus with emotion not to be described; under the symbols He beheld the divine realities. He felt himself truly in the house of God, and perhaps for the first time became fully conscious of the greatness of His mission; *He comprehended that He would be*

called to fulfil those solemn types. When His mother, grieved at His tarrying behind, addressed Him in words of tender reproach, He gave that deep and mysterious reply, "How was it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"<sup>1</sup>

His precocious wisdom had been already revealed in an interview with the doctors of the Temple; His questions showed such riches of thought and feeling, that the illustrious masters were themselves confounded. The questions of a child are often more embarrassing, by their artless depth, than the arguments of the most consummate dialectician. They go straight to the truth by the royal road of simplicity. There was not a white-headed Rabbi in the schools of the law who could meet the questions of this child of Nazareth. This scene in the Temple was of great moment in the development of Jesus, by revealing Him to Himself. The next eighteen years He passed in the most complete obscurity. We may not seek to penetrate their mystery; it is enough for us to know that they prepared Him in solitude for His great mission. He spent them in prayer and a holy life.

<sup>1</sup> Luke ii. 49.

## JOHN THE BAPTIST. BAPTISM OF JESUS CHRIST.

### I. Preparation and first preachings of the Forerunner.

THE day was approaching when Jesus would emerge from the obscure retirement in which He had spent His childhood and youth.

It was then there arose from the desert the voice of the great prophet, whose mission was to go before and prepare His way. John the Baptist was like those couriers who, according to oriental custom, run before the sovereign to remove every obstacle out of the royal road. Only, as for Christ the royal road was that of sacrifice and of sorrow, it was fit that the precursor of the Crucified should be a martyr for righteousness. No character among the prophets and apostles is more beautiful than that of the Baptist. Ardent and austere, deriving his force from his absolute disinterestedness, humble as he was great, he is not merely a prophet, he is ancient prophecy personified in the last of its representatives, and appearing on the threshold of the Gospel history, to own and hail the Messiah of whom in all ages it had spoken. As Jesus Himself said, "Among the sons of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist." And yet he is but the son of a woman; his greatness is not unmixed with weakness;



he has his failings. This mighty voice of the desert has accents altogether human, which reveal a heart subject to the same fluctuations as our own. We have not here the fictitious type of man, but a true and living character sketched in a few outlines. The name of Elias, given to John the Baptist, was not to be traced simply to the influence of the popular superstitions of which we have spoken; it was the expression of a true conviction. Everything in him recalled the great prophet of action. Elijah did not write a single page in the Book of God; his book was himself, his prophecy was his life: it was enough for him to appear, to call up before degenerate Israel the living image of holiness.

Such was John the Baptist, a messenger to startle degenerate Judaism. That which he spoke, he lived; this preacher of repentance was himself a penitent, who had been the first to bend beneath the weight of Divine Justice, and who trembled under it still. He might indeed be called the power of God, but it was power in an earthen vessel. The prison of Machærus was to him that which Horeb was to Elijah, when he lay down beneath the juniper-tree, overwhelmed by the burden of his terrible and glorious mission. Nothing is so touching as the tears and agony of the strong and brave. John the Baptist was the man of a transition period; the son of the old covenant, he beholds the new, but does not enter into it. Like Moses, he dies on the border of the land of promise. He sows in tears, and hears

not the joyous song of the reapers. Such a mission costs much to those who are charged with it; and the perpetual contradictions and torturing doubts of which they are conscious, form no small part of their peculiar trials.

The circumstances of the birth and childhood of John the Baptist are familiar to us. Marked from his birth with the sign of a divine consecration, he was educated in all that was noble and true by his father Zacharias and his mother Elizabeth. His eyes opened to the first rays of that "dayspring from on high," which had been already hailed by the pious priest. Doubtless the memorable events which had heralded his birth were told him from his tenderest years, but not being elucidated then, as to us they are, by the whole Gospel history, they would appear somewhat obscure to him, so much the more as we can hardly suppose Elizabeth and Zacharias to have possessed the same depth of religious intuition in the habitual course of their life, as they had reached in the moment of inspiration. Again, great realities appear more or less indistinct when they are only beheld from a distance. The communications between Mary and Elizabeth were doubtless rare, on account of the distance between Nazareth and the hill country of Judæa. It appears probable that the parents of John the Baptist had been long dead before he entered on his active ministry, as no mention is made of them from that time. It is not then surprising that the august memories of his

infancy should have been wanting in definiteness to the young prophet ; nor is there anything to prove that he had any personal acquaintance with Jesus during this period. He knew only with certainty that the times of Messiah were at hand, and that he himself, at the first signal from God, would be called to play an important part in this great religious crisis. Such a consciousness could not fail to give a singular fervency to his spirit.

His consecration to God was to take a less positive and less official form than the priesthood, to which his birth designed him. It was not priests nor doctors that were wanting ; the very spirit of Judaism was stifled under rites and traditions. It was this spirit which had to be reanimated and liberated from all that oppressed it, and for this work there was needed the free and mighty breath of prophecy. Everything was exceptional in a vocation so grand as that of the Forerunner. From his childhood he was a Nazarene, bound, that is, by a special vow to abstain from all fermented liquors, and to let no razor come upon his head : this was among the Jews a manner of marking peculiar consecration to God.<sup>1</sup>

Nor was this all. We find from the fragments preserved of John's preaching, that he was overwhelmed with grief, in view of the miseries and sins of his nation. Paying no regard to appearances, he discerned in all ranks, and not least beneath the austerity of the Pharisee, the tokens of impenitence

<sup>1</sup> Numbers vi. 1-21.

and impiety. Therefore he so ardently craved for a general purification and a moral renovation; he could not rest in the now empty solemnities of a religion which had become vain and degenerate, and it was not possible for him to acquiesce patiently in the ignoble routine of life led by his contemporaries.

The conflict of his great soul drove him into the wilderness. Nothing can be more false than to represent him as an oriental ascetic, a sort of fakir. He was an utter stranger to that Indian doctrine which places the principle of evil in the body and not in the soul, and which seeks salvation in asceticism. John the Baptist was a preacher of repentance; sin was, in his eyes, essentially a moral deviation, and not a fatality of the physical nature. He hated evil with such an intense hatred only because he saw in it a free act: so far from pretending to urge man to self-annihilation as the secret of his own salvation, he never ceased to invoke and proclaim the true deliverer. Nor did he found in the desert a sort of monastic order, like the Essenes, or like that Banes of whom the historian Josephus was for a time a disciple, and who desired his followers to be clothed like himself in the leaves of trees, to eat only herbs, and drink only water.<sup>1</sup> John the Baptist sought in solitude a haven for prayer, a place of retirement in which to prepare, under the secret eye of God, for his momentous mission. His austerity

<sup>1</sup> Josephus, *Vita* II.

was no rule, no imposed observance; it was the very expression of his deep spiritual life. He wrapt himself in a rough mantle of camel's hair, and fed on locusts and wild honey; only because the great thought which absorbed him left no place for minor considerations.

The desert of Judæa, for which John the Baptist exchanged the smiling vineyards of Hebron, amidst which his childhood was passed, reaches to the Dead Sea. There it assumes an aspect of desolate grandeur. Every trace of earthly life vanishes; one could fancy one's self beyond the world of man. The accursed lake spreads its heavy and motionless waters between rugged downs and the severe line of the mountains of Moab. The justice of God seems alone to speak in all this gloomy region. What a school for such a man as John the Baptist!

It was there, in presence of the terrible majesty of that blasted land, that he heard the words of prophets and holy men, not from the icy voice of a scribe, but directly, as if they sounded for him alone. As soon as he speaks, we are conscious that he has grasped their inner meaning, and has been nourished on the very marrow of the Scripture. The Old Testament lives again in him. The two great utterances which he brings from the desert, contain the two capital revelations, to which all the preparation for the Gospel had been tending. Law and prophecy, denunciation of sin and promise of

pardon, the flame which consumes and the light which consoles—is not this the whole of the old covenant? “Repent ye, the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Such was the two-fold message of John the Baptist. On his inspired lips the Law had all its terrors, and the promise all its glorious assurance. He had read in the desert, as none had yet done in Israel, that book, at once bitter and sweet, which is the very book of God. Doubtless he still imaged the future to himself in the colours of the past; his spirit had not broken the theocratic mould; but nothing was more foreign to his heart than the dreams of political agitation, which so often stirred his countrymen to revolt. He looked for a revolution in the conscience, for the yoke which weighed him down was not that of Rome, but of sin. The deliverance, in his eyes, must be of the nature of the bondage, and assume a moral character. He might have attained a much wider popularity if he had used his fervent words in the service of the passions of his compatriots, for these had been wrought up to the last degree, since the definite annexation of Judæa to Syria, which involved the loss of the last shadow of independence till then retained. But the prophet’s mission never was to follow the tide of the multitude, but to stem it. When the time comes for John the Baptist to attack the powers that be, he will do it in the name of the God whom they outrage; he will use no other weapon but his word. Thus material force will have *no* power over his testimony, which

will stand for ever, like all that belongs to the higher order of spirits.

It is probable that John's reputation had spread even before he came forth from the desert; the people, eager for novelties, had gone thither seeking him.<sup>1</sup> At length the moment came for him to quit his retirement. Doubtless he had received direct revelations as to the near appearance of Messiah. He himself alludes to such, when he says that God had sent him to baptise.<sup>2</sup> His commission then was directly given from heaven. The rite of baptism is the summary of his preaching and of his whole ministry: it connects itself with the ablutions so much observed in the religion of Moses, but it extends their significance, by substituting the idea of moral purification for that which is merely ritual. With him, the question is not of such or such a special defilement, but of that general corruption which has befallen human nature, and which calls for a powerful and new manifestation of Divine love. Thus his baptism represents present repentance and coming deliverance; it is the true sacrament of this era of preparation, the condensed utterance of which is a cry of grief and hope, taking the form of a prayer of penitence and trust. The later prophets had declared that the times of Messiah would be marked by the purification of hearts. "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean," we read in Ezekiel.<sup>3</sup> "There shall be a fountain opened for sin

<sup>1</sup> Matt. iii. 1-5.

<sup>2</sup> John i. 33.

<sup>3</sup> Ezekiel xxxvi. 25.

and for uncleanness," says Zechariah.<sup>1</sup> Evidently the baptism of John only translated into an impressive ceremonial these symbolical words. If for ablutions he substituted immersion, it was the better to represent the gravity of the disease which was to be healed. His baptism is closely connected by him with the coming of Messiah; it is the symbol of hope no less than of repentance; it derives its value precisely from the approaching inauguration of the era of salvation. John the Baptist never himself claims to introduce this era, he only prepares it; his baptism is in the name of Him who is to come.

The effect was immense in Judæa when the young prophet came forth from the desert, already attended by a numerous band of hearers. What a contrast was there between him and the doctors of Jerusalem, puffed up with their virtues and knowledge, wearing ostentatiously their long robes and broad phylacteries! Habited like the simplest shepherd of the mountains, with a girdle of rope round his loins, the Baptist tramples under foot all the idle prejudices, all the evil passions, all the vices of his nation. He carries truly in his hand that axe which, he says, is about to be laid at the root of every corrupt tree, for his unsparing speech strikes at the very foundation of evil. His preaching is perfectly adapted to the moral condition of his age. To the formalists, who imagine they can discharge by ceremonies their debt to heaven, he proclaims the judgments of a God

<sup>1</sup> Zechariah xiii. 1.



who hates their vain oblations. "Who hath taught you," he exclaims, "to flee from the wrath to come?"<sup>1</sup> The national pride is carried to the verge of idolatry. The Jews are intoxicated with the thought of counting their genealogy from patriarchs and prophets, and declare with Jesus Sirach, "This glorious heritage shall continue to our posterity; our sons shall endure for ever, and their glory shall never be removed. Abraham is become the father of a great multitude; no glory is equal to his, and he has perpetuated the divine covenant to his race."<sup>2</sup> It is to these proud and unworthy inheritors of the great past, that the Forerunner dares to address such words as these: "Say not ye, We have Abraham to our father; for I tell you that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."<sup>3</sup> John has a searching word for every class of his hearers. To the publicans he preaches scrupulous fidelity in their calling; the soldiers he enjoins to avoid deceit and violence, and to be content with their wages. If the great ones of the earth mingle in the rough crowd which usually surrounds him; if he sees Pharisees and Sadducees coming to him to espy him, he has but one word for them, "O generation of vipers!" He will purchase neither their complaisance nor their toleration. To all, he repeats emphatically the call, "Repent ye, the time is fulfilled."<sup>4</sup> But he knows the human heart too well

<sup>1</sup> Matt. iii. 7.<sup>2</sup> *Jesus Sirach*, XLIV.<sup>3</sup> Matt. iii. 9.<sup>4</sup> See Luke iii. 1-17.

to trust even to the rite which he has instituted; it is not enough to be plunged in the baptismal stream and to give tokens of a sincere sorrow. Repentance, like sacrifice, may be a vain ceremony. It is worth only what it costs. "Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance," he cries: "he that hath two coats let him impart to him that hath none, and he that hath meat let him do likewise." There is nothing in these words, whatever may be said of them, marking the excited demagogue. Charity and justice may be preached without the charge of communism.

These scenes were enacted in the country which lies between the desolations of the Dead Sea and the oasis of Jericho, on those low shores between which the Jordan pours its turbid waters. John appears to have abode by preference in a small spot on the eastern shore, called Bethany, the same name as the village near Jerusalem. But he frequently crossed from one side to the other, for, according to Luke, his ministry was exercised throughout "all the country about Jordan." It was but a few hours' journey from the holy city to the river. Jericho was a flourishing town, situated in a smiling and very populous valley bordering on Galilee. The year in which the Baptist left the desert was a sabbatical year—a time of universal rest, when a pause was made in all the occupations of common life. This accounts for the extraordinary concourse of men of all ranks, gathered round the Forerunner.

A large number of his hearers, impressed by his

discourses, and also by the stern sublimity of the man, were baptised, confessing their sins. Since the days of Ezra, nothing had been seen like it. The movement was general. Many, no doubt, were the subjects only of a passing impression; but others, among whom were some young Galileans, attached themselves to the person of John the Baptist, and avowed themselves his disciples. They aided him in his ministry and baptised the multitudes with him. The Forerunner instructed them and moulded their religious life; he appears even to have taught them a form of prayer.<sup>1</sup> The shores of the stream resounded with the groans of the penitent. One might have deemed that a new Israel was about to arise from those sacred floods, already the witness of so many miracles. There could be no doubt that this was indeed a prophet who had come forth from the desert; this was truly a voice from heaven breaking in upon the vain doctrines and traditions of the schools. Might not this strange and mighty man be He who should come, or at least might not this be Elijah, descended from his chariot of fire to herald in Messiah?

These rumours spread among the people with growing rapidity. The Baptist, as soon as he heard them, disavowed them utterly. "There cometh one after me," he cried, "mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose; I, indeed, baptise you with water, but he shall

<sup>1</sup> Luke xi. 1-4.

baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." "My baptism is only a sign of purification; He will bring you the true purification with the Divine Spirit, of which He will be the dispenser. As says the prophet Joel, He shall be the fire that lightens, vivifies, and purifies while it consumes. Lord of the harvest, He will thoroughly purge His threshing-floor, and gather the wheat into His garner. He is the master; I am but the servant."<sup>1</sup> The Sanhedrim, so much the more jealous of its authority, because it was obliged to confine itself strictly within the sphere of religion, was stirred by the influence acquired by John the Baptist. It therefore sent a deputation to him, to make inquiry into his pretensions. They put to him the same questions as the people: "Who art thou then; the Christ or Elias?" The reply was yet more definite. Pressed by his interlocutors, after his earnest assertion that he is neither Messiah nor Elias, he thus defines his mission: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord." He is only a voice, a witness. "He is not the light, but is come to bear witness of the light." But he precedes very closely the great Unknown, who is to fulfil the purpose of God. "There standeth One among you whom ye know not. He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, for he was before me."<sup>2</sup> Thus the revelation of Messiah, which John had received in the desert, had cost

<sup>1</sup> Paraphrase of Luke iii. 16-18.

<sup>2</sup> John i. 15.

a ray of illumination for him upon the mystery of Messiah's eternal existence. By the same supernatural teaching, he knew that he should soon behold Him with his own eyes, and should recognise Him by a miraculous sign.

## II. Baptism of Jesus Christ. Year of Rome 780.

As John the Baptist was fulfilling his accustomed office, Jesus Himself appeared before him. It was the first step of His public life. He had not hitherto crossed the threshold of his dwelling at Nazareth; no disciples accompanied Him, for none among His compatriots had discerned the master and prophet in the obscure Galilean peasant. It appears evident from the narrative in the Gospels that John had not met Him for long years. He might easily have forgotten the features of His countenance, even if he still preserved a vague recollection of the events of his childhood. Yet, when Jesus approached the shores of the river, John, by a divine intuition, recognised on His brow the seal of spotless purity; all that he had heard from his infancy came back to his memory, and measuring at a glance the distance which separated this new comer from his ordinary proselytes, he exclaimed: "I have need to be baptised of thee, and comest thou to me?" "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness," was the reply of Jesus. Scarcely is He plunged in the waters of the stream when a glorious vision completes the illumination of the Baptist. He sees

the heavens opened, and the Spirit of God descending upon Jesus in the form of a dove, the gentle image of an abiding inspiration, and a voice which is not of our world speaks the word, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Then the Baptist exclaims in an ecstasy: "I knew him not." It is indeed now that for the first time he knows Jesus in His glory as the only-begotten Son and the Messiah.

The baptism of Jesus marks a great epoch in His life. It cannot be justly brought forward as arguing anything against His perfect holiness. It is evident from the Gospel narrative, that this ceremony assumed in His case an exceptional character. John shows clearly by his hesitation that he knows he is baptising a perfectly holy being. Why, then, did Jesus submit to be baptised? The Baptist himself answers the question by this significant saying, "That he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore I am come baptising with water."<sup>1</sup> Thus the baptism of Christ was first of all designed solemnly to inaugurate His ministry. It was on this account it was attended with the extraordinary circumstances which mark its importance. To see in it only that in which it resembles an ordinary baptism, and to pass by those points in which it differs, is to ignore its distinctive features, and to be untrue to historical facts. John, the representative of the old covenant, is commissioned to

<sup>1</sup> John i. 31.

proclaim, in the name of the prophets and holy men, whose legitimate successor he is, that the new covenant has begun and the promised Messiah is come. But this kingdom of heaven, which is about to be set up on the earth, will have for its subjects humble and sorrowful souls and contrite hearts. The baptism of repentance is the affecting symbol of this whole dispensation. Is it not fit that the King of a repentant people should Himself prepare their way? Is He not identified with the race that He comes to represent? He who is to die for it, may He not for it repent, and bear on His heart the burden of its moral miseries? In the Mosaic institutions, defilement was not confined to the defiled person; contact with such an one rendered purification necessary. Here we have not simple contact with a fallen race; there is the most absolute union with it. This mystery is the very basis of redemption, and it is not more difficult to admit it on the banks of the Jordan, than in the garden of Gethsemane and on the Cross.

The next day after, John met Jesus, and pointed Him out to the two disciples who were with him by these significant words: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world."<sup>1</sup> He would be readily understood by the pious Israelites who had been present at the morning and evening sacrifice in the Temple at Jerusalem, and had partaken of the Paschal lamb; who also knew

<sup>1</sup> John i. 29.

well the prophetic oracles in which the promised deliverer was represented under the image of a victim.<sup>1</sup>

### III. John the Baptist and Herod Antipas.

The Baptist was gone to the south of the country of Judæa, to Enon, near to Salim, a place famous for its springs in the midst of a parched and desert country. Already the favour which first followed him had been succeeded by opposition. The chiefs of the nation had brought his baptism in question, and his disciples became so much the more jealous of his influence ; therefore they came to him, complaining that Jesus seemed seeking to supplant him by performing the rite which he had instituted. This complaint elicited the beautiful testimony of the Baptist. He meets it first by a reference to the special mission entrusted to him, which places him infinitely below Messiah. Where subordination is so marked, rivalry is impossible. He represents his relation to Jesus by a poetical and touching figure, which shows how deeply he had drunk in the Old Testament imagery. Messiah is the spouse of the holy people ; he himself is but the friend of the bridegroom, and his office is only to prepare the marriage feast. His joy is to hear the voice of the well-beloved on the eve of the realisation of the mystic union, and then to be lost at it were in his friend's glory and felicity. " He must increase,

<sup>1</sup> See *Isaiah liii.*



but I must decrease."<sup>1</sup> This is the motto and inspiration of the whole life of John.

This noble renunciation, this abnegation of self, is the secret of his greatness and his courage. He heeds not the praise of man; therefore he panders to none, but speaks ever the same bold and manly language, protesting against evil in all its forms. This voice, which comes from the desert, is the great voice of conscience and of right. It is in the power of none to put it to silence, because it asks nothing of the world and concedes nothing to it. Not from pride, but from humility, springs that true dignity which can stand erect under threats, because it has never yielded to caresses. John the Baptist is only a reed of the desert, according to the figure used by Jesus, but he is a reed which cannot be broken by the tempest of persecution, because it has not bowed beneath the breath of favour. This, Herod Antipas will soon learn.

This tetrarch of Galilee, a weak and passionate man, had fallen under the power of Herodias, the step-daughter of Herod the Great, the legitimate wife of his brother Philip Herod, who lived in retirement at Rome. There Herod Antipas had met her, and conceived for her a guilty passion. The ardent and vindictive spirit of the Herods lived in this woman. She unhesitatingly abandoned her husband, who had done her the wrong of condemning her to a life of obscurity; she then

<sup>1</sup> John iii. 30.

induced Antipas to divorce himself from his first wife, who was the daughter of Aretas, King of Petra. The latter, on learning the insult that was preparing for her, fled to the castle of Machærus, situated at the eastern extremity of the Dead Sea; and, taking refuge with her father, subsequently raised a war against her unworthy husband.<sup>1</sup> Antipas was revelling in his criminal pleasures, surrounded only by obsequious courtiers, when an importunate voice was heard, echoing that inner voice which none can wholly stifle. This was the voice of the son of the desert, the new prophet, whose popularity, as Josephus tells us, had already disquieted Herod.<sup>2</sup> "It is not lawful for thee," said John the Baptist, "to take thy brother's wife." This invocation of the eternal law of right, which took no account of his royal will, filled him with madness; he could not endure this appeal to the higher power, which issues its sovereign decrees in the secret places of the soul. What! should there be anything forbidden to the prince before whom all men cringed? This importunate protest, which was all the more hurtful because so well founded, must needs be crushed. The unwelcome censor was thrown into the depths of a gloomy dungeon in the citadel of Machærus. But Herod's feeble and vacillating soul could not thus be freed from his influence; he felt in his deeper self that the Baptist was right; he listened sometimes to his passion, sometimes to conscience,

<sup>1</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* XVIII. 5, 1.    <sup>2</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* XVIII. 5, 2.

and sometimes he even took counsel of his prisoner. But they were only the hesitations of a nature without any moral force, and the smiles of Herodias were more persuasive than the words of the austere preacher. In the mad elation of a feast, celebrated at the very castle of Machærus on the occasion of Herod's birthday, the king made a rash vow to the daughter of Herodias, to recompense her for having forgotten her royal dignity, and charmed the assembly by a dance worthy of a courtesan. He pledged himself to give her whatever she should ask. Counsell'd by her mother, she asked the head of John the Baptist. Thus, it seemed to her, that stern voice might be stifled, which made itself heard even in the tumult of the feast. Though absent, he was there, a silent and terrible guest, rebuking the adulterous woman. But it was in vain the noble head was struck off; from the blood of the prophet arose a yet more terrible cry. Herod could never cease to hear it for a single day, for as soon as the fame of Jesus began to be spread abroad in Galilee, he exclaimed, with blanched cheek: "This is John the Baptist!"<sup>1</sup> Men may kill the body, but truth and conscience they cannot kill.

<sup>1</sup> Matthew xiv. 2.

## *THE TEMPTATION.*

**B**ETWEEN the baptism of Christ and the last testimony rendered to Him by the Forerunner, occurs one of the most momentous events of His moral life. He also passed through that great school of the wilderness, in which Moses and John the Baptist were moulded into the mightiest witnesses of God. When a man has to be the representative of a solemn and holy idea, it is well to live face to face with it, and look at it apart from all the attenuating influences to which it is subjected in human life. In solitude it puts on all its royalty ; there it keeps its absolute character, conceding nothing to the compromises of an imperfect realisation. But the desert was not to Jesus merely a holy retreat ; it was also the scene of His first combat and His first victory.

The scene of the desert was the counterpart of that which transpired more than four thousand years before, in the shades of Eden. It is true that the first father of mankind—bound to his descendants by so close a union, that he in a manner included them in himself—underwent the great ordeal of free existence in a sojourn of beauty and glory, while the second Adam passed through it in a fearful solitude—image of a world deep-graven with the brand of the fall and of condemnation. Those denuded rocks,

that reddened soil scorched by a burning sun, that sulphurous sea stretching like a shroud over the accursed cities, all this land of death, mute and motionless as the grave, formed a fitting scene for the decisive conflict of the Man of Sorrows. There is contrast strongly marked in many points between the first and second temptation ; it is no more a question of the simple perpetuation of a happy union with God, but of the recovery of this union under the bitter conditions which have resulted from its rupture. It would be taking a narrow view of the moral conflict of the life of Christ to limit it to the forty days spent in the wilderness. In reality, His whole life was a conflict, but its two great battles were fought at the commencement and the close of His ministry—in the desert of Judæa and the garden of Gethsemane.

In the temptation in the wilderness, we witness the appearance of that mysterious being, who is represented in the first book of the Bible as connected with the history of the fall. Satan, as we have shown, is not the Persian Ahriman, who represents the element of evil in nature as well as in moral life ; he is a fallen angel, created in light and purity like all God's creatures, but having failed to abide in them.<sup>1</sup> Doubtless he also fell under the trial of moral freedom universally imposed on intelligent beings made in the likeness of God. We know nothing of the nature of this trial, of the manner of

<sup>1</sup> See John viii. 44.

his rebellion, nor of the sphere in which it took place. It is impossible to admit or reject with any certainty the hypothesis so often sustained, that the gigantic wrecks on which the new life of our planet has flourished, give evidence of a tragical history before the human era, in which man was preceded on the earth by beings higher than himself in their origin, who have therefore fallen lower, and are become the natural and desperate enemies of the race which has succeeded them. We are bound to hold the reality of the existence of devils; nothing in reason opposes the possibility of moral beings, different from man, more utterly perverted and endowed with a subtlety of nature which allows them wider and more rapid action. There are times when the imperceptible barrier which divides us from the invisible world—so far from our eyes, so near to our hearts—seems to fall altogether.<sup>1</sup> Such are the great religious crises of humanity. Now there is no crisis comparable to the opening of the era of Christ; we do not think then that we are yielding to any superstition, in recognising in the temptation the direct intervention of the chief of those evil spirits, who are the worst enemies of man.

The question proposed to Jesus Christ in the temptation is the moral question itself, such as it was presented to the first Adam, such as it presents itself to every free creature. He is directly called to decide if He will fulfil the one supreme law of the

<sup>1</sup> See John viii. 44.

moral world, the sum of which is obedience and love, or if He will seek his own satisfaction, His own interest. The question is not stated in a vague and general way; it is as Messiah that He is tempted; that which is aimed at is the miraculous power which He possesses, or at least with which He is invested by God day by day. This power, employed for selfish and personal ends, might serve first to procure easily for Messiah and for the people, who would receive Him with acclamation, all material advantages. It might then become the means of dazzling men by brilliant signs, which would satisfy their passion for the marvellous, and after having given possession, it would give glory. Nothing could be easier than to obtain, by its means, power and an earthly kingdom, for no throne would be exalted enough for a Messiah who would multiply marvels, and make plenty and riches spring up beneath His feet. Such was doubtless the gist of the temptations which passed before the mind of Jesus, in His vision in the desert after His forty days' fasting.

“If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, Place Thyself above the order of Providence for the satisfaction of Thine hunger. Jesus is carried in spirit into the Holy City, to the pinnacle of the Temple, the centre of that theocracy of which He might so easily assume the sceptre. “If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down; for it is written,

<sup>1</sup> Matthew iv. 3.

He shall give his angels charge over thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, If Thou art the Messiah, work brilliant miracles, prodigies, the result of which shall be to astonish and fascinate the people. Then the world with its glory appears to Jesus from the summit of an ideal mountain. “All this power and glory will I give thee,” says the tempter, “if thou wilt fall down and worship me.”<sup>2</sup> In other words, the glory and the power shall be Messiah’s if He consents to act in the spirit of the Prince of this world. Under this triple form the temptation is one. Work miracles for Thine own advantage. Be Thine own ambassador and not God’s. Seek Thyself, instead of consecrating Thyself to the glory of Thy Father’s kingdom. In the very nature of things temptation must always be one, for there is only one way of violating the moral law, namely, to live to oneself and not to God, to substitute egoism for love.

The suggestions of the tempter are clothed in a religious garb; he quotes texts like a scribe. After all, what he does in the desert is but to sum up, in expressive symbols, the whole programme of the false Messianic dreams of the Jew, who only disguised under holy words a carnal and earthly ambition. The Christ of Hebrew apocalypses, such a Christ as the contemporaries of Jesus desired and looked for, answered in all points to the false

<sup>1</sup> Matt. iv. 5, 6.      <sup>2</sup> Matt. iv. 8, 9.



Messiah whose image Satan held up before the true. It seems the very voice of the Jewish Sibyl of Alexandria, vibrating with ardent and earthly desires. Is not the deliverer painted, in these famous oracles, as a man with a sword girt on, and crushing to dust every rival power? Is he not destined to open for the land of Judæa the springs of boundless plenty, and to make wine flow freely from the fruitful stock? Is he not, finally, to work by great scenic effects? His reign is represented under the brilliant colours of a theocratic millennium. This is what popular feeling demanded at the time of Christ; it was excited by His miracles, especially by those which promised material gain, such as the multiplication of the loaves. The multitudes would make Him a king; and if He had lent Himself to their will, they would have hailed Him with enthusiasm.<sup>1</sup> He had only to go with the tide of opinion to assure His immediate dominion. The temptation in the desert was, then, no chimera; it was in harmony with the truth of facts.

Jesus hesitated not a moment. To each temptation presented to Him to declare Himself as the theocratic Messiah, the idol of degenerate Judaism, He replied by a word of the Lord, against which there was no appeal. To the suggestion that He should change the stones into bread, He opposes His faith in that Divine and wise Providence which suffices for every need. "It is written, Man shall

<sup>1</sup> John vi. 15.

not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."<sup>1</sup> That text of Deuteronomy<sup>2</sup> had reference to the marvellous manner in which Israel was fed with manna in the desert. He, who depends on a God so good and so mighty, has only to commit himself to Him with entire confidence; the gift of working miracles has been bestowed upon Him for other ends than the supply of His bodily wants. Jesus repels, with no less determination, the proposal to invoke the Divine intervention, and to produce a striking effect by a useless prodigy. "It is written," said He, "thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."<sup>3</sup> To desire a miracle for such an end, would be to imitate Israel, imperiously demanding a new manifestation of the power of Jehovah.<sup>4</sup> Finally, Jesus rejects, with holy indignation, the infamous bargain of the tempter, who promises Him earthly royalty, on condition of His falling down and worshipping him. This time He used the divine word as a sword. "Get thee hence, Satan, for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."<sup>5</sup>

The great declaration is now made; Christ is come not to be obeyed, but to obey. He has given Himself unreservedly to God and to man. He has

<sup>1</sup> Matt. iv. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Deut. viii. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. iv. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Compare Deut. vi. 16 with Exodus xviii. 2-7.

<sup>5</sup> Matt. iv. 10. Deut. vi. 13. The quotation is not literal. Jesus Christ refers to the great commandment of the Old Testament.

made His choice between selfishness and love; the second Adam has retracted the rebellion of the first; He has come out conqueror from the great moral ordeal, but the victory is itself a sacrifice, an immolation; it leads not to earthly glory, but to death; not to the throne, but to the cross; for in entering on this path of obedience and love, He will come into collision with all the prejudices of the Jewish nation. He will belie all its hopes and kindle all its hatred. A Messiah who will not reign in the sense in which Jerusalem understands His kingdom, must perish; king or victim He must be; there is no alternative. Every time he repelled a temptation of the Wicked One, He ascended another step of the altar of sacrifice. Nothing is now wanting but the consummation; the Son of Man has already accepted in its essence all the ignominy and all the grief that is awaiting Him.

Such is the solemn grandeur of this conflict in the desert, in which we see Jesus victorious, but victorious according to that mysterious law of His kingdom, which makes suffering and death the first elements of victory. The events of His life will be but the development and consequence of the great moral fact, which has just been accomplished in that deep seclusion. Thus is attested that royal liberty of the Son, to whom sorrow and shame will be but the fulfilment of His freely accepted lot. "No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John x. 18.

That which is branded as ignominy and defeat on earth, is glory and triumph in heaven. At the close of His vision, therefore, Jesus sees angels coming to minister to Him, and the wild beasts lie harmless at His feet, as in the first days of Eden.<sup>1</sup> Paradise is born again in this desert solitude, "the wilderness blossoms as the rose;" the seraphim who keep the gates of Paradise adore the Son of Man, in token that the great work of reparation is begun. Eden, closed and blighted by rebellion, shall be opened again by obedience and sacrifice to the new race of man, when its Head shall have accomplished His work in the domain of outward fact, as He has already accomplished it in the moral kingdom.

<sup>1</sup> Mark i. 13.



**First Period**  
**of the**  
**Ministry of Jesus Christ.**



## *PUBLIC MINISTRY OF JESUS.*

FROM HIS BAPTISM TO HIS RETURN TO GALILEE AFTER  
THE FEAST OF PURIM, YEAR OF ROME, 780-781.

WE divide the ministry of Jesus into three periods, which are closely linked together; from the very commencement of His public life the young Galilean Teacher declares His Messiahship, but the revelation of Himself is gradual, and as the severer aspects of His mission only appear little by little, it excites at first but slight opposition. But in proportion as Jesus makes Himself known in His true character, as the founder of a spiritual kingdom, and not as the theocratic Messiah looked for by His contemporaries, the popular sympathy is perceptibly alienated from Him. Neglect, not unaccompanied with hatred, is the result of the first period of His ministry. The second is an open contest with the chiefs of the nation, the principal scene of which is the holy city. Lastly, comes the inevitable close, shame and death, but also the eternal victory in the seeming defeat. Corresponding with the development of unbelief in the mass of the Jewish people, is the growth of faith and love in the small circle of the disciples of Jesus. While the Master is combating degenerate Judaism, He is



forming the first nucleus of the Church, which will, at the appointed time, sever itself gradually from the bonds of the synagogue and communicate to the world the results of its work.

The holy life of Jesus bears, from its commencement to its close, a redemptive character, because it is one long sacrifice of obedience and love. Human life is thus restored to its normal condition: thenceforward the bitter consequences of the Fall, freely accepted, are transformed into acts of reparation; wherever the first Adam introduced rebellion, the Son of Man, the head of the new race, substitutes entire submission and perfect holiness in the midst of inconceivable anguish: He brings reconciliation out of the punishment itself; for, while we who have merited it must needs endure it, He voluntarily accepts it, and submits Himself to it, thus raising it to the height of a holy sacrifice. He thus restores the harmony between God and man, and reunites the moral link which was broken at the Fall. Therefore, that which is of highest import in the ministry of Jesus, is neither the contest with His enemies, nor even the education of His apostles, but His life itself—that human life, like that of other men, save for the defilement of sin, but transformed into one continual sacrifice. “My meat and my drink,” He said, “is to do the will of him that sent me.”<sup>1</sup> This is the motto and the epitome of His whole career.

<sup>1</sup> John iv. 34.

This principle of obedience, which is the comprehensive motive of His ministry, is not manifested only by His acceptance of suffering and death, but also by His constant readiness to follow day by day, and, as it were, step by step, the directions of Providence. He will neither hasten nor retard the hour for which He came, the hour in which His sacrifice was to be consummated; He Himself might be regarded as the first to apply the principle: "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Nothing is more heroic than patience like this; it is that absolute self-renunciation, which does not wait to be called forth by great crises, but colours the whole life.

His ministry bears the seal of unity. The simple statement of facts dispels, as a poetical illusion, the whole hypothesis which has been fancifully built up as to His first appearances in Galilee. Nowhere, in reality, do we find any trace of that pastoral (coarse, in spite of its poetical adorning), which is said to have been once enacted on the flowery shores of the Sea of Tiberias. We shall see that He, over whose very cradle swooped a murderous sword, never ceased to awaken hatred. No doubt, His day of labour had its dawn and its noon, before it set in blood; but even the morning sky was red with the precursive signs of the storm. As soon as He opens His lips, His words are by turns gentle and severe. The fire which He lights upon earth does not simply kindle adoration; it is a consumer of evil. It was enough for it to appear in the midst of

mankind to trouble it to its depths, and to give rise to the most absolute contradictions. This is the sign of His power, and of the solemn sublimity of His ministry. From the first day to the last, love and hate grow and strengthen side by side : in place of an unaccountable change in His character and modes of thought, transforming Him from a fair David into a fierce Goliath, we have a continuous progression ; the laws of spiritual sequence, without which the unity of His personality would be destroyed, are inviolably maintained.

#### I. Political condition of Judæa.

Let us recall, in a few outlines, the political situation of Judæa at the exact moment when Jesus appeared before His countrymen. The shadow of independence, which had been left to it under the vassal kingdom of Herod the Great, had long vanished. Augustus had annexed Judæa to the Roman Empire, not by making it one of those senatorial provinces governed by proconsuls, but as directly dependent on his authority. He associated it with the government of Syria, the capital of which was Antioch, the residence of the imperial legate. In consequence, however, of its importance, and the difficulties presented by the complete subjection of such a people, the *procurator* of Judæa enjoyed a certain latitude in his administration ; he at the same time managed the affairs of Samaria, but as a second department, distinct from the first. Faithful

to the wise policy which it had pursued with so much success for centuries, Rome interfered as little as possible with the usages and institutions of the conquered province. The Sanhedrim was, therefore, allowed to continue side by side with the procurator, but its power was necessarily very limited. Its jurisdiction was confined to matters of religion and small civil causes: the procurator alone had the right of decreeing capital punishment. The high-priestly office had lost much of its importance. The Asmoneans and Herods had reduced it to a subordinate magistracy, of which they made a tool for their own purposes. Herod the Great had constituted himself guardian of the sacerdotal vestments, under the pretext that he had had them restored to their first magnificence on the Levitical model; he gave them only to the men of his choice. The Romans hastened to follow his example, and thus to keep in their hands an office which might become perilous to them.

The procurator of Judæa resided at Cæsarea. He only came to Jerusalem for the solemn feasts, or in exceptional cases to administer justice. His prætorium stood near the citadel of Antoninus. The Roman garrison in the whole of Palestine did not exceed one legion. The levying of imposts on movable property and on individuals, led to perpetual difficulties; no such objection was raised to the tribute of two drachms for the Temple, which was levied by the Sanhedrim. The tax-gatherers in

the service of the Romans were regarded as the representatives of a detested rule ; thus the publicans—for the most part Jews by birth—were the objects of universal contempt. The first rebellion of any importance took place on the occasion of the census under Cyrenius.

At the period at which we have arrived, Judæa was governed by Pilate, the third procurator since the annexation to the empire ; he had found in the high-priestly office John surnamed Caiaphas, son-in-law of Annas, the son of Seth, who had for a long time filled the same office under Valerius Gratus. Pilate had an ally rather than a rival in the Sadducee, Caiaphas, who acted on no higher principle than the interest of his order, and the maintenance of his power. Pontius Pilate was wanting in the political tact which knows how to soften in form the severities of a foreign rule ; he was a man of vulgar ambition, or, rather, one of those men without patriotism, who think only of using their authority for their own advantage. He took no heed of the peculiar prejudices and aversions of the people whom he was to govern. Thus he sent to Jerusalem a Roman garrison with standards ; the Jews regarded this as a horrible profanation, for the eagles were worshipped as gods. Assailed in his prætorium at Cæsarea by a suppliant crowd, which no force could disperse, the procurator was compelled to yield to prayers which might soon be changed into desperate resistance. From that moment his influence was gone in Judæa ;

he compromised it still further on the day when he caused shields of gold, bearing his name engraved beside that of the Emperor Tiberias, to be suspended from the outer walls of the citadel of Antoninus. This flattery to the sovereign, which might have been unaccompanied with peril elsewhere, was received at Jerusalem as a gratuitous provocation, and he was obliged to recall a measure, persistence in which would have led to a terrible tumult. Having thus made himself an object of general aversion, he could not even do good without danger : his plan to build an aqueduct, a thing peculiarly needed on the burning soil of Judæa, created opposition so violent that it could only be put down by force. Under such a governor, the national passions were in a perpetual state of agitation. This access of patriotic fanaticism created great obstacles to a purely spiritual work like that of Jesus.

Gaulonitis, Peræa, and Galilee belonged still at this time to the family of Herod. The tetrarch Philip governed the north-west of the country for thirty-seven years, and was distinguished for his moderation. He built the town of Banias, or Cæsarea-Philippi, near the sources of the Jordan, and also Bethsaida Julias, on the eastern shore of the Lake. Galilee and Peræa were the portion of Herod Antipas, the murderer of John the Baptist. His divorce from the daughter of Aretas, after his marriage with Herodias, his brother's wife, had brought war upon the wide provinces which he governed.

He was about soon to undergo a humiliating defeat. Like his brother, he was childless. Under the influence of such a prince, surrounded by a licentious court, evil propensities had free play, and the corruption of manners was a bad preparation for a religion of purity and self-denial. In the lowness of the times, the Herods, though of the family of the vile despots who had sold the independence of the Jews, were regarded as in some measure a national dynasty. They had a party which bore their name, and which, in religious matters, combined, after the example of Herod the Great, Pharisaism and Sadduceeism.

Such were the political circumstances in the midst of which Jesus was placed. They contributed, no doubt, to bring about the catastrophe which terminated His career ; but great as was the tyranny which oppressed Judæa, it did not resemble the administrative despotism of modern times. In this all is prevention ; the system of legal provisions checks all original, new and energetic action. In the old world, on the contrary, in those lands of the sun where external life expands so freely, great liberty of action is enjoyed up to the day of terrible and final repression ; the masses may be freely addressed without an accorded, and consequently limited, right ; toleration is large, even if tyranny is great and redoubtable. There is no security under such an arbitrary government ; but so long as no particular cause awakens distrust, there are fewer bonds in such a state of

society than in one of softer manners, but engaged in a network of universal bureaucracy.

## II. Commencement of the Ministry of Jesus.

The ministry of Jesus commences with His return from the desert after the Temptation; but, careful to follow the direction of Providence, He does not wholly emerge from private life, till an iniquitous captivity has brought to a close the preaching of His Forerunner. Even then the circle of His familiar disciples is small, but among them He reveals Himself without reserve, and acts openly as Messiah.

We have seen that John the Baptist greeted Jesus, as He returned from the wilderness, with these words: "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world." This saying brought to Christ His two first disciples. One was Andrew, the son of Jonas; the other, who, with the reserve of holy love, does not name himself, was John, the son of Zebedee. The words exchanged between them were brief and simple: "Master, where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see."<sup>1</sup> After this short dialogue, they went back no more to the Baptist—the end of their life was attained—the triumphant, "Eureka" of Archimedes burst from their joyful hearts. "We have found the Messiah," said Andrew to his brother Simon the day after this interview.<sup>2</sup> The aspect of Jesus was even more

<sup>1</sup> John i. 38, 39.

<sup>2</sup> John i. 41.



impressive than His words. We have no description of His countenance, but we know that it was radiant with holiness and love. The inward light, which lighteth every man, shone in His face, and nothing is so telling as that involuntary and spontaneous expression of the moral life. The pure gaze of Jesus went down to the depths of the conscience; it was enough for Him to turn and look upon a poor sinner to break his heart.<sup>1</sup> Simon, the son of Jonas, felt the power of that glance from the first day when he was brought to Jesus by his brother Andrew. The Master discerned immediately the distinctive features of that strong character. "Thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone,"<sup>2</sup> said He to the son of Jonas. Under the rough exterior of the young Galilean boatman, Jesus marked the spirit of hearty zeal which, purified by contact with Himself, would fit him for his great initiative mission among the apostles. The first impression received by these young men was ineffaceable, but it needed to be confirmed; thus we shall find them returning for a time to their ordinary occupations; for this first call must be carefully distinguished from the definite call which they afterwards received. They were already, no doubt, sincerely attached to Jesus, and might call themselves His disciples,<sup>3</sup> but they were not yet ripe

<sup>1</sup> "And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter : and Peter went out and wept bitterly." (Luke xxii. 61, 62.)

<sup>2</sup> *John i. 42.*

<sup>3</sup> *John ii. 2.*

for the exceptional vocation to which they were destined.

To this small, scarcely-formed group, two men soon voluntarily joined themselves. The first, the countryman and friend of the Galileans who had followed John the Baptist, was Philip of Bethsaida. He, like them, was waiting for "him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write."<sup>1</sup> Arrested by a sovereign word of the Carpenter of Nazareth, who was as yet to him only the son of Joseph, he in his turn exclaimed, "I have found him!" A missionary as soon as a disciple, he carries the great news to another countryman, Nathanael of Cana, who was on his way back to his own city. He had already perceived the dawn of the new day; he was a man of pious expectation and holy desire, "an Israelite indeed." The Master saw him, as, according to the habit of the time, he was reading the Scriptures under one of the fig-trees which bordered the road to Cana.<sup>2</sup> He knew that this was to Nathanael one of the hallowed hours of his life. "When thou wast under the fig-tree," said He, "I saw thee." These simple words, which contained, no doubt, an allusion to the most sacred secret of His soul, brought Nathanael to the feet of Jesus; he forgot the humble origin of the Messiah, which had for an instant staggered him; the poor

<sup>1</sup> John i. 46.

<sup>2</sup> It was a Jewish custom for the traveller to read the Holy Scriptures under the *shade of wayside trees*.

hamlet of Nazareth vanished from his eyes, before the glorious vision of heaven opened by the Son of Man, and brought down to earth by the mystic ladder, which Jacob had beheld in his dream at Bethel.<sup>1</sup> He was destined subsequently to take his place among the apostles, under the name of Bartholomew.<sup>2</sup>

Jesus rejoined His mother at Cana,<sup>3</sup> in the house of a friend, where a wedding was being celebrated. Mary, who had faithfully kept in her heart the great memories of Bethlehem, and who was not unapprised of the solemn scene at the Jordan, was ardently impatient to see her Son inaugurate His kingdom with power. Thus she seized the first opportunity that presented itself to ask a miracle of Jesus. The wine ran short at the feast, and she would fain urge Him to repay, on a magnificent scale, the hospitality He had received under that roof. She desired a miracle for the glory of her Son, and also for the satisfaction

<sup>1</sup> John i. 51.

<sup>2</sup> The identity of Nathanael and Bartholomew is proved first by the fact that Bartholomew is always placed next to Philip in the list of the apostles (Matt. x. 3 ; Mark iii. 18 ; Luke vi. 14) ; and second by John xxi. 2 : "There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples."

<sup>3</sup> The Cana of the Gospel is not *Kefer Kena*, situated at two hours' distance from Nazareth, but *Kana el Dschelil*, or Cana of Galilee, three leagues to the north-east of Nazareth. We have in this ancient Arab designation a confirmation of the Gospel text. (Raumer, *Palestine*, p. 130.)

of her own maternal heart. Such motives must needs be set aside. Mary learns with what a seal of severity her relations will henceforward be marked with Him whom she bore in her bosom : she has to prove how much a great mission costs to natural affections. Thus her heart begins to feel the point of the sword which is to pierce it through. If no mother was ever so happy and blessed as Mary, none ever suffered more from the terrible exigencies of such a mission as that of Jesus. "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" said He; "mine hour is not yet come." In other words, "It is not for thee to direct me; I obey only a sign from my Father; the hour of outward glory for which thou dost fondly look is still far distant." Jesus set aside the human impulse to the miracle; the miracle itself He did not withhold. Wrought as it was in the midst of a small circle, and in private, it was well adapted to produce a divine assurance in the hearts of His disciples, without exciting their national hopes. It serves thus to mark the difference between Jesus and the Baptist. The Fore-runner spoke only of austerity and sadness, because his mission was to preach repentance. He who brings salvation to the world does not dry the spring of holy tears, but He adds an element of joy and gladness; He speaks not only of death to self, but of new life.

After a short stay at Capernaum, where He wrought several miracles,<sup>1</sup> Jesus repaired to the holy

<sup>1</sup> This is proved by the words of Nicodemus : "No man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him"

city to keep the feast of the Passover, still accompanied by the young Galileans who had attached themselves to His person. His first public act was an open protest against the profanation of the sanctuary. Men saw in Him a new Phinehas, a devotee eaten up with zeal for the house of God.<sup>1</sup> No doubt it was lawful that the victims required for sacrifice might be bought in the proximity of the Temple. It was also needful to have recourse to the money-changers, that the two *deniers* levied for the charge of the altar might be paid in Jewish money, free from the impress of forbidden images. But instead of confining themselves to that which was strictly necessary, the vendors had opened a noisy market. It was not wonderful that the court was given up to mercenaries, when the sanctuary had become the harbour of religious cupidity, and worship itself was turned into a means of trading, by men eager for power or credit. When the spiritual portion of the service was profaned to such a degree, what could be expected of the material? Jesus, in chastising these gross abuses, inaugurated a work of reformation, which in its progress would soon attack the hypocritical solemnities of the Temple. Taking a whip of small cords, He drives out the buyers and sellers, and overthrows the tables of the money-

(John iii. 2); and by the request of the inhabitants of Nazareth, when He abode in that city, that He would do the same works they had heard done at Capernaum. (Luke iv. 23.)

<sup>1</sup> John ii. 17. Compare Numb. xxv. 11-13.

changers. "Take these things hence," He exclaims, in words of stern rebuke; "make not my Father's house an house of merchandise."<sup>1</sup> His very tone indicates His right to speak such royal words. This majestic and sudden expression of righteous anger strikes all the beholders with awe. The chiefs of the hierarchy alone are unmoved by the general feeling; their only thought is how they may defend themselves against this rising influence. The representatives of external authority never belie themselves. Even when the most incontestable moral power asserts itself before their eyes, they still demand an official warranty for its operation. "What sign showest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?" It does not befit the dignity of Jesus to give them a direct reply; by a bold enigma He asserts His truly divine right to reform the abuses of religion. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."<sup>2</sup> In other words, "Continue to destroy by your sins the worship which has as its visible centre this sanctuary of stone; I will build up the true faith in three days by my resurrection." In reality, the Jewish religion fell to the ground on that day when He whom it set forth by so many types and ceremonies, was put to death by its adherents. Thenceforward the Temple was as nought; it was an empty monument; spiritually it was overthrown. By His resurrection from the dead, Jesus brought from the tomb the definitive religion of the world, and thus He

<sup>1</sup> John ii. 16.<sup>2</sup> John ii. 19.

rebuilt the true sanctuary. This saying went far beyond the comprehension of those who heard it, but Jesus no less truly asserted His prerogative by this appeal to what the future would declare. He could not more strongly vindicate His mission as a reformer than by testifying to the corrupt Jews that they were destroying their own religion, while He alone was capable of restoring the worship of the true God.

Many of the beholders of this scene were vividly impressed by it; but between transitory impression and a true faith the difference is great, as none knew better than Jesus.<sup>1</sup> Towards evening, however, a learned doctor, a member of the Sanhedrim, named Nicodemus, was seen coming into the house to which Jesus had retired. The deportment of the young teacher had filled this ruler with admiration; that which he had heard of His miraculous power inclined him to think that here must be a prophet indeed. But he dared not compromise his dignity by an open interview with a Galilean. Therefore he came to Jesus in secret. His excessive prudence showed that he was as yet but little prepared to sacrifice to truth the advantages of his position; this tenacious clinging to his privileges was a veil over his eyes. Jesus, therefore, according to His wont, replied less to the question of the Pharisee than to his secret thoughts: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." He, the doctor revered and consulted, believes himself to have reached the

<sup>1</sup> John ii. 25.

highest stage of the religious life, and to be of all persons the most capable of receiving new revelations. So far from this, the new teacher tells him he has not even eyes to see. Nicodemus would not have been staggered by the mention of a new birth, if the words had been addressed to one of those Gentiles who knocked daily at the gate of the synagogue, and who were bound to break with all their past life. But the mystery is how a member of the Sanhedrim can be placed in the same rank with such. He does not hesitate to interpret the words of Jesus in a gross and material sense. How can an old man be born again? "Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" He would rather turn the thought of his interlocutor into ridicule, than admit for an instant that such a man as he could be a stranger to the kingdom of heaven. It is not the first time that pride has led to spiritual dulness. "Verily, verily, I say unto you," is the reply of Jesus, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.<sup>1</sup>" In order to penetrate into the region of the divine, a new sense is necessary. The baptism of John prepares for this new birth, but more is needed yet—even the supernatural operation of the Spirit, by which the soul is born to the life divine. His mysterious influence is like that of the wind;

<sup>1</sup> John iii. 6.



invisible, it is yet real. The sceptical interrogations of the Pharisee, Jesus meets by his own testimony; he asks the less, Jesus gives the greater; he seeks to know how effects so amazing can be produced among men on earth, Jesus opens to his view the heavenly horizon. He Himself comes down from that celestial region whose fruitful influences on earth He has been describing. When He speaks of heaven He speaks of that which He has seen, for He is the Son. And now He is about to be lifted up before men, as was the serpent of brass in the wilderness. This lifting up—which is, in truth, the sacrifice of Himself—will save all who look on it in faith, for God has given His Son to the world, that whosoever believeth in Him might be saved. A great and awful gift! The secrets of all hearts are to be revealed by the mere appearing of Christ, for there will be no difficulty in distinguishing those who love the light and those who seek to bury their evil deeds in darkness.<sup>1</sup> Let us not forget that while Jesus spoke thus of the invisible world, the glory of that world itself perceptibly irradiated His whole being. He was Himself the living commentary of His discourses. In converse with a scholar and man of learning, He could not speak in the same tones as to the ignorant multitude. He produced His credentials as the Master of Divine Wisdom, and He brought them from the highest heaven; for He had

<sup>1</sup> Such is the thread of thought in this remarkable discourse. (*John* iii. 1-22.)

learned with His Father the things which He spake unto men.

III. Return of Jesus into Galilee. Meeting with the Samaritan woman. First public preaching.

During several months, Jesus yet remained in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, rather carrying on the preparatory work of John the Baptist than commencing His own. We have already noticed the noble testimony given to Him by the Forerunner, on the occasion of the baptism administered by the disciples of Jesus. The Pharisaic party, irritated against Him since the scene in the Temple, began to manifest its opposition in a manner which decided Jesus to return into Galilee. He was confirmed in His resolution by the news of the imprisonment of John the Baptist. Jesus chose to go through Samaria; this road is particularly barren as far as Bethel, where it reaches the smiling hills of Ephraim. From this point it is only a winding mountain path, but through picturesque scenery. It is reckoned three days' journey from Jerusalem to Sychar, the modern Nablous. Travelling on foot, under the burning sun of Syria, Jesus, about the middle of the third day, reached the well which Jacob had digged before Sychem. Near it is the tomb of Joseph; the surrounding country has in no way changed since the sacred hour when, like the poor pilgrims who may be met at the same spot to-day, returning from Nazareth, the Saviour of

the world sat down by it to rest. The well is now dry, but its depth can be easily measured. All around are still the waving corn-fields. Before the traveller rise the two mountains of Ebal and Gerizim; on the latter a heap of stone marks the place where stood the Samaritan temple, built by Manasseh to rival the sanctuary at Jerusalem. The flat roofs of the neighbouring city are discernible through the olive-trees. In its whole general aspect the place is unchanged; no page of the Gospel story bears a more clear seal of historical reality.

It is well known that a mortal hatred divided the Jews and the Samaritans; the former regarded the latter as apostates and traitors; they lavished on them terms of contempt, and received a large return. This animosity had deepened, since, under the government of Coponius, some years before, a band of Samaritans had made a sudden descent upon Jerusalem during the feast of the Passover, and had profaned the sanctuary by throwing into it human bones. Their design was to render impossible for that year the celebration of the grandest solemnity of the Jews.<sup>1</sup> The latter regarded it as an abomination to hold any intercourse with a Samaritan. The Rabbis, with a false austerity, held equal scruples about speaking to any woman whatever. This explains the astonishment of the Samaritan woman when Jesus opened the conversation with her. She had come, according to Eastern custom, with her

<sup>1</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* XVIII. 2, § 2.

pitcher upon her head, to draw water. This woman united in herself all that could excite the contempt of a Jew, not only by her extraction, but also by her antecedents. But the redeeming love which seeks that which is lost, is neither held back by prejudice nor repelled by shame. Forgetful of His weariness, Jesus fixes His pitying gaze on this degraded and ignorant creature. He has read the dark secret of her life ; He sees also within her the vague aspirations which so many sins have not wholly stifled. The interview opens with perfect simplicity. The Master makes the commonest incident of daily life the basis of the highest lessons. The well on the edge of which He is sitting becomes an expressive emblem of the divine life, which He will cause to flow in the heart like a perennial spring of living water.<sup>1</sup> The teaching becomes more direct when Jesus aims like a pointed dart at the conscience of this sinning woman, the stern remark : " Thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thine husband." " Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet," she instantly exclaims, overwhelmed and subdued by this revelation of herself. She at once submits to this Stranger, who can read so well the secrets of her heart, the great question debated between her people and the Jews. " Where should men worship ? Is it at Gerizim or at Jerusalem ?" Jesus tells her that henceforward there shall be no more one consecrated place. " God is a Spirit, and

<sup>1</sup> John iv. 14.

they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Thus, this poor despised woman is the first to receive the revelation of that glorious truth, of which St. Paul was to assure the triumph in the world and in the Church, at the cost of so many heroic conflicts. Nothing can show more clearly that Christianity did not wait for this great apostle to assert her independence.

Just as Jesus has answered this woman's question about Messiah with the words, "I that speak unto thee am he," the disciples come back from the town, bringing the food they had gone to seek to recruit His wearied body. But all bodily wants are forgotten when the whole soul is absorbed in a work of obedience and love. "My meat," replied Jesus, when they pressed Him to eat, "is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."<sup>1</sup> Already the harvest was whitening in this field of the Great Master, in which so many holy labourers had sown and toiled under the old covenant. What were the cravings of the lower nature compared with the ardent impatience of the reaper, called to gather these ripening ears?<sup>2</sup> By one of those rapid transitions so common with Him, Jesus passes from His own mission to that of His disciples. After all, they have but to enter on a field already prepared and fertilised. Let them not forget the rougher work which has gone before their glorious task, and let the reapers associate the sowers in their joy.

<sup>1</sup> John iv. 34.

<sup>2</sup> John iv. 36.

Hardly has He finished this conversation with His disciples, when a number of Samaritans are seen coming from the city, attracted by what the woman of Sychar had told them of the great prophet who was come into their country. They gather round Him, they listen, and their growing faith expresses itself in these beautiful words: "Now we believe, not because of thy testimony: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." Assuredly such a result was in itself a demonstration that the harvest of souls was ripening. Every event in this holy life was a new revelation.

It was not only as a measure of prudence, and in order not to hasten the moment of final conflict between Himself and the chiefs of the nation, that Jesus went back into Galilee on learning the imprisonment of John the Baptist; this event was to Him a new reason for entering in a more decided manner on His public ministry. Hitherto, with the exception of the purification of the Temple, which was rather a strong protest against the profanation of divine service, than the inauguration, properly speaking, of His own work, He had acted in a private sphere. The baptism administered by His disciples was not distinguished in any marked manner from that of the Forerunner. But now that John's voice was silenced, the moment was come for Messiah to stand forth before the people. Jerusalem is not a

<sup>1</sup> John iv. 42.

favourable place for such a manifestation ; His cause would there be foredoomed to failure, for His enemies have in their hands all the means to arrest it from the first step. The holy city will be His scene of conflict ; it cannot be the theatre of His habitual working. The true Israelites are not to be found there, or at least the city is completely dominated by the heads of the hierarchy. Galilee lends itself much more readily to His design, not because it is more ignorant than Judæa, but because it is less subservient to the theocracy, and more accessible to unofficial teaching. This province was, nevertheless, strongly attached to the religion of the Old Testament, and, like the border provinces, it was remarkable for tried fidelity to the national cause, without the intractable fanaticism of Judæa.

Jesus goes again to Cana. This visit is marked by a second miracle, accorded to the faith of an *employé* of the royal house of Herod Antipas,<sup>1</sup> who came to entreat Christ to heal his son, lying sick unto death at Capernaum. This strong faith received immediate confirmation ; the child recovered at the very hour in which the father had implored Jesus to come and heal him. Three hours' walking from Cana brought Jesus to Nazareth. It was a bold step to assert His Messiahship in the very town in which He had grown up as the supposed son of Joseph the carpenter. There He passed the Sabbath, and repaired to the synagogue, where the people

<sup>1</sup> John iv. 46, 47.

were assembled to listen to the customary reading of a portion of the holy books. The passage for the day was that sublime chapter of Isaiah, which describes the promised Deliverer of Israel, not as a triumphal king, but as the friend of the poor and lowly, opening the eyes of the blind, giving liberty to the captives, and bringing in the era of mercy, the great jubilee of pardoned humanity.<sup>1</sup> In the midst of the rapt silence of the assembly, Jesus exclaims: "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." Then He proceeds to comment with divine unction on the sacred text. His hearers, remembering His obscure origin and childhood, are moved and astonished, but, faithful to the Jewish spirit, they imperiously demand a miracle at His hands, as if it was a debt of which He must acquit Himself to the town where He had been brought up. His reply was justly severe. He asserted the sovereign freedom of divine grace, which then, as in the days of Elijah and Elisha, acknowledged no other claim to its gifts than humble faith. Had not a poor Phœnician widow at Sarepta, and a Syrian general at Damascus, been preferred of old to the proud and unbelieving Jews? At this saying all their evil passions were aroused; they thrust Jesus out of their city, but He, "passing through the midst of them, went his way." Thus a murderous cry was raised against Him from His first appearance in Galilee.

<sup>1</sup> Luke iv. 18.



IV. The Feast of Purim at Jerusalem. Healing of the paralytic. Apologetic discourse.

About the month of March, Jesus repaired to Jerusalem to be present at the Feast of Purim, instituted in commemoration of the deliverance of the Jews by Esther and Mordecai. This festival brought large numbers of people into the holy city, and was distinguished by its popular and joyous character. To the north-east of the Temple, not far from the Sheep Gate, now St. Stephen's Gate, was situated the great piscina of Bethesda; here the sick and paralytic came to seek relief for their maladies in its waters, which had the property of being intermittent.<sup>1</sup> The piscina formed a kind of circular portico, from which a narrow staircase led down to the pool. On a marble bench were crowded the sick and the impotent, presenting a lamentable spectacle, which could not fail to move the compassionate heart of Jesus. According to His wont, He addressed Himself first to the poorest and most hopeless. An unhappy paralytic lay by the pool, who could never find a friendly hand to lift him into the water. "Wilt thou be made whole?" Jesus said to him; "Arise, take up thy bed, and walk." The paralytic believed the word; he arose as in the days of his strength. Never did the Pool of Bethesda better merit its beautiful name of House of Mercy than on this day. In this scene,

<sup>1</sup> The verse, John v. 4, which speaks of the angel troubling the water, is wanting in the most ancient manuscript.

so grand and touching, the Pharisees saw but one thing—a violation of their tradition. In presence of that healed and pardoned man, they raised a cry of scandal, because the miracle had been wrought on the Sabbath day. Ultra-Sabbatarianism was the very genius of the Pharisaic religion: in defending this it defended its essential principle and end; in openly attacking it, or rather, in simply placing Himself above its absurd restrictions in order to do good, Jesus founded the religion of the spirit, and abolished that of the mere letter. One touch of His compassionating love sufficed to break the galling network of narrow precepts; at one breath of His lips, the so carefully embalmed corpse of Judaism crumbled into dust. To do a deed of mercy on the Sabbath day was to oppose eternal and divine morality to that which was merely artificial and conventional. The Pharisees were right, from their point of view, in commencing the conflict on this ground; they were fighting verily *pro aris, pro focis*.

The excitement was great in Jerusalem when it was known that the new teacher had dared to violate the Sabbath in order to heal an immortal creature made in the image of God. He was assailed with violent recriminations, and a determined purpose was formed to bring the offender to justice.<sup>1</sup> Jesus does not condescend to justify His deed. He raises the question to a higher sphere. He appeals to His eternal relation with God, to that entire subordina-

<sup>1</sup> John v. 16.

tion of the Son to the Father, which results in a profound harmony of purpose and a community of power. The activity of Divine love is ceaseless ; it knows no rest, no Sabbath. Hence its right to intervene at all times for the good and salvation of men. This oneness of Jesus with God has just been manifested in the miracle for which He is reprobated ; it will be manifested yet far more gloriously in the judgment of the world and the resurrection of the dead at the last day. These truly divine works are even now begun. The words of Jesus condemn the hearts which reject them, and give eternal life to those by whom they are received. Thus, even now He is the Judge, and His voice bids the dead to live. Do they call upon Him to prove these bold assertions which rouse the cry of blasphemy ? He invokes other testimony than His own ; He has a witness greater than that of John the Baptist ; it is God Himself who speaks by these miraculous works of His ambassador, and who makes Himself heard with yet greater power in the depths of the heart by the secret voice of conscience, — a truly divine utterance to those who receive it. "Ye have not his word abiding in you, for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not." It is false to bring forward Holy Scripture against this inward witness ; they do but confirm each other. The real cause of the division between Jesus and the Jews is a moral cause : "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life," and why will you not ? Because

between your life and mine there is a fundamental discord. I seek not my own glory; I represent self-sacrificing love, and you are proud seekers of human praise. This constitutes the incompatibility between us; on this account it is you have not the faculty to comprehend Me. You, the pretended disciples of Moses, know not how to read the books which you teach, and which are full of Me. You believe not in your own oracles: how then should you receive my words! <sup>1</sup>

Such is in substance this first apology of Jesus, so admirably appropriate to the occasion, and so conclusive; it soars straight to the heights of heaven, and descends again into the deepest recesses of the human heart, there to seek and find the broken ring to which should be fastened the golden chain of truth. Thus Jesus points out, in the perverted or deadened conscience, the principle of the opposition which He encounters. This opposition is far more of a moral than an intellectual character, since it has against it the resplendent witness of the miracles, and that of Scripture from Moses to John the Baptist. The demonstration is complete and decisive, but it only serves the more to exasperate those who will not be convinced. Jesus is obliged to leave Jerusalem, where He possibly intended to remain till the next Passover.

<sup>1</sup> John v. 17-47.

## MINISTRY OF JESUS IN GALILEE

DURING THE TIME OF PUBLIC FAVOUR.

I. General character of the ministry of Jesus in Galilee. Early miracles and early public discourses in that country.

WE have seen a few young Galileans attaching themselves to Jesus from the commencement of His ministry, accompanying Him in His journeys to Jerusalem, and living in intimate association with Him. They were already known as His disciples, and were indeed such, in the affection and respect with which they regarded Him, but there was as yet nothing definite in the relation which bound them to the Saviour. On their return with Him into Galilee they resume their customary labours; but they are ripening for a more positive vocation. Ignorant as they yet are, they have learned to know and love Jesus, and have a vague consciousness of His exalted dignity. Their hearts are His. There is nothing to hinder the Master's forming a yet closer tie between them and Himself. The first whom He definitely called were James and John, the sons of Zebedee. These were simple fishers, living on the shores of the Lake of Gennesaret, and maintaining themselves by their craft. Jesus joins *them one day at dawn, just as they are drawing up*

their net on the strand, having toiled all night and taken nothing. He enters into one boat, which is Simon's; this serves Him as an extempore pulpit, from which to address the people who crowd upon the shore. When His discourse is finished He bids Simon throw his net again: and now it can hardly be drawn in for the multitude of fishes. The miracle touches the ardent and impressible soul of Simon to its depths. This manifestation of supernatural power flashes a new light on all that he has already seen and heard; he feels himself in the presence of a holy being, and falls at His feet exclaiming, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."<sup>1</sup> No moment is more favourable for the great call than the moment of humiliation, for a heavenly vocation is best received on the knees. "Fear not," says Jesus, "from henceforth thou shalt catch men."<sup>2</sup> The four disciples hesitate not a moment; they leave their boat and their nets. This call is not yet the institution of the apostolic office, but it is the first condition of it, for, before being an apostle, it is necessary to have left all to follow Jesus. The individuality of the first disciples will come out gradually before us, and we shall sketch their principal traits when they receive their definitive commission.

Luke v. 8, 9. The words of Peter imply a previous relation to Jesus, for the miraculous draught would not have in itself led to reveal to him the holiness of the Master. The narrative of John is implied in that of Luke.

Luke v. 10. Compare Matt. iv. 18-22; Mark i. 16-20.

Of all the provinces of Palestine, the most beautiful is that in which Jesus now lived for several months, scattering everywhere, as He passed through it, the seed of divine truth. Galilee is distinguished from Judæa by its fertility and the softness of its landscapes. It has not the wild grandeur of the environs of Jerusalem; plentifully irrigated by numerous watercourses, it spreads before the eye a brilliant carpet of enamelled verdure, encompassed by mountains. Tabor is a grassy dome, the outlines of which seem chiselled against the sky. It is especially in contrast with the stern aspects of Judæa that the soft, smiling scenes of Galilee impress the traveller. If Christianity was to be the offspring of mere beauty of nature, it might assuredly have found a more enchanting birthplace—such as the golden shores of Ionia, or those magic isles which rise out of a sea of azure on the shores of Asia Minor. The most striking feature of that part of Galilee which was the principal scene of the ministrations of Jesus, is an air of quietness and serenity not to be met with elsewhere. The Lake of Tiberias, even after so many wars and ravages, still bears the impress of pure and peaceful beauty. Its western shore is reached by the last slopes of a chain of green hills, which sink undulating to the water's edge. Oleanders fringe the blue waters; opposite, on the eastern shore, the flood beats against rugged rocks, the last ramparts of the wild country of the Gadarenes. *At the northern extremity, the Jordan loses itself in*

the lake, to re-appear in a foaming sheet at the southern end. In the distance, towards the north-west, Hermon lifts its snowy peaks, which stand out against the intense blue of the Syrian sky; while a little further, to the south-west, the mountain of Safed closes in the horizon. In the radiant hours of early morning, or those of an empurpled twilight, the lake reproduces with exquisite charms in its still mirror, all the accidents of light. A golden haze sometimes hangs over it like a heavenly veil. One would fain wake from the surrounding hills the echo of the holy words of the Master. If there was ever under heaven a temple not made with hands, it is surely this country, the true land of the Gospel, on which we as plainly read the history of the Redeemer as in the pages of our sacred books. The thoughts of Christ were cast in the mould of this tender aspect of nature, and from it He drew His chosen emblems.

No doubt, in order to form a just idea of the country, it should be seen animated and peopled as it was eighteen centuries ago, instead of as it now is—branded with the curse of Islamism. Formerly, on the shores of the lake rose numerous towns, inhabited by an active population; the inhabitants of the little plain of Gennesaret gave themselves up to agriculture, while the dwellers on the shore lived by fishing and trading. In the times of Christ, the towns on the eastern shore were, first, Magdala, now *Megel*; Chorazin, recognisable by a spring over-



shadowed by a fig-tree ; Bethsaida (*Kan-Minieh*), of which there remains only a ruined aqueduct and a fishing hamlet ; and last, not far from the embouchure of the Jordan, Capernaum (*Tell-Hum*), which was the habitual abode of Jesus, now nothing but a heap of stones. Standing between the Plain of Gennesaret and the Lake, this town became a mart of considerable trade. On the western shore stood a second Bethsaida, built by Philip, tetrarch of Iturea and Gaulonitis. These little cities enjoyed much prosperity, owing to their excellent situation ; they were, however, regarded rather as villages than towns ; they had few men of mark among their inhabitants, on account of their distance from the capital. Each of them had its synagogue and representatives of the various Jewish schools. The Pharisees and Sadducees strove for influence here as at Jerusalem, but their credit was far less than in the immediate neighbourhood of the Temple. The population would be tolerably dense in so rich a district. The Lake was perpetually furrowed by the boats of the fishermen ; nothing was more easy than to gather a multitude in the open air in this fine climate.

Such was the land in which Jesus led the itinerant life of a missionary ; He had no fixed abode, and except occasional sojourns in Capernaum, He passed His days in going about doing good. Endowed with a heart pre-eminently loving, a son so tender, that in a dying hour His thoughts were of ministering consolation to His mother, Jesus yet allows Himself to

be restrained by none of the ties of natural affection. In order to accomplish His especial work, He must needs live aloof from all the social conditions of ordinary life: The birds of the air have their nests; the foxes their holes, and the sons of men their homes, but the Master might not have where to lay His head, when He came to fulfil His mission on earth, and to inaugurate the true religion for man. The period of initiation has peculiar exigencies which do not belong to subsequent periods. Jesus' first disciples were themselves obliged to share in these stern necessities. When He called them to leave all and follow Him, He was only bidding them do what He Himself had done. Yet let us make no mistake: this demand of complete self-renunciation in their case was not exceptional; it has never ceased to be made of God's labourers, and it is for ever true that he who puts his hand to the plough must cast no look backward. Only the extraordinary is more blended in our day with the ordinary current of life, than could be the case in the beginnings of Christianity.

Jesus lived chiefly with His spiritual family, freely using their hospitality, as did the Rabbis of the time. He voluntarily remained the poorest of all; if He accepted the assistance of His followers,<sup>1</sup> He never rose above the humblest condition of life. He was surrounded by the disciples whom He had enlightened, by pious women who had found pardon and

<sup>1</sup> Luke viii. 2, 3.

consolation in His words; so far from repelling the fallen, He drew them to Him by the powerful attraction of compassion. Jesus sought out the feeble, the forsaken, all who needed succour and pity, the beggar on the highway, the leper by the city gates, and the little child in its mother's arms. His ministrations were divided between the multitudes to whom He preached the Gospel, and the familiar circle of His disciples, whom He taught with a solicitude only equalled by His patience. Then at evening, after so many labours, and often such painful conflicts, He ascended the nearest hill, and there renewed His strength from its eternal source by solitary prayer. It was from these sacred heights, to which His soul fled for refuge, that His word came down like a living stream to spread its full floods over the thirsty land of Israel.

The Judæan year was divided by various festivals. Jesus owned the obligation of their observance but without taking any heed of the traditions of the Pharisees. Every Sabbath He repaired to the synagogue in the town where He was, and, with a single exception, He always went up to Jerusalem to the solemn feasts.

We shall best enter into the manner of His ordinary life by following Him through one of the days of which the narrative is given us in the second Gospel. It was a Sabbath.<sup>1</sup> As soon as it was day, Jesus repaired to the synagogue, and founded His teaching

<sup>1</sup> See Mark i. 21-39

on the portion of Scripture which was read. The impression produced by His words was profound; the listeners felt at once the difference between this Teacher and the Rabbis to whom they were accustomed. Instead of an impersonal organ of tradition, they heard a living voice, which went down into the depths of their heart; it was spiritual authority taking the place of dead dogmatism; they were conscious at once that in His teaching there was an extraordinary virtue. A poor man possessed with a devil was present in the assembly, and was seized with convulsions. The devil, which exercised a mysterious influence over him, threw him into a frenzy of excitement; with a look and a word Jesus rebuked the evil spirit, and the sufferer was healed and in his right mind. The witnesses of this astonishing scene were filled with admiration, and went out of the synagogue to spread in the city the news of the miracle.

Jesus retired to the house of Peter and Andrew, where He healed Peter's wife's mother of an attack of fever. The hours of the day were spent under this hospitable roof, the meal was taken in common, and the disciples received doubtless from the lips of the Master, the explanation of His discourse in the synagogue. We at least know that such was the wont of Jesus in the familiar circle of His friends. But the events of the morning had produced a strong sensation in the city. The rumour had spread that the new prophet worked mighty miracles, and that

His mercy was as large as His power. The whole population gathered at the gate of Capernaum. The gate of an eastern city is the great place of public resort; it occupies the same position as the *agora* of Greek cities. In the ardent climate of Syria, the cool hours of evening are chosen by the inhabitants for coming out of their houses; then begins a singularly noisy stir of life—the women go to the fountain with their pitchers on their heads, the men gather in groups about the gates of the city to talk over the events and interests of the day. That evening, the report of the miracles of Jesus banished every other theme at Capernaum. Every family brought out its sick; all these sufferers were assembled at the gate—some bedridden, some tossing in the terrible agony of possession. A melancholy spectacle, the epitome in this little corner of the world of all a world's sufferings! But the scene was soon changed. Jesus with tender pity "laid his hand upon the sick folk and healed them." The enraptured crowd followed His retreating footsteps with shouts of acclaim. The next morning, before the sun was up, while all was silent in Capernaum, He sought a solitary place by the shores of the lake, and spent long hours in prayer.<sup>1</sup> Thus did He hide Himself from glory and fame, and, ever at hand to succour and save, was sought for in vain in the hour of popular enthusiasm. A day like this may be regarded as the epitome of the entire life of Jesus.

<sup>1</sup> Mark i, 35.

Public and private teaching, works of mercy, intense and solitary prayer, drawing heaven down into his heart—these are the elements of His daily course.

From the break of day the inhabitants of Capernaum began to seek for Jesus, to hear Him again, and yet more, to receive fresh tokens of His miraculous mercy. The Master never repulsed the crowds who came to Him; He needed this great concourse of hearers to make His name known to His people. But He carefully avoided remaining long in one place, so as to give no pretext to enthusiasm to take the form of political agitation. He goes through the country, returning from time to time to Capernaum, to the house of Jonas; everywhere as He goes, He sows the seeds of holy words and works of mercy. During this period His miracles make a more impressive appeal to the multitude than His words; the admiration for Him is universal and unreserved, because it is not yet tempered by the austerity and spirituality of a teaching which passes their comprehension and their desires; they have eyes only for His works. His name passes from mouth to mouth; Judæa is stirred by hearing what is passing on the borders of the Lake of Gennesaret; Peræa and Decapolis echo the acclamations of Galilee. Fame seeks Him who never sought it. And what does He do? With sublime simplicity Luke tells us: "So much the more went there a fame abroad of him . . . but he withdrew himself into the wilderness and prayed."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Luke v. 15, 16.

One of the cures wrought by Jesus specially arrested public attention. In one of the Galilean towns He was met by one of those wretched lepers, outlaws from all social life, who still hover about the gates of the towns of Judæa, exhibiting their hideous sores and uttering heartrending cries. Jesus healed the sufferer by laying His hands upon him. In spite of His express command, the man who had been delivered from so terrible a woe went about everywhere publishing this great miracle,<sup>1</sup> and the enthusiasm about Jesus rose above all bounds. It was founded in part on a misunderstanding which could not last long, and which the humility of the new prophet was always tending to dispel. A Messiah who seeks seclusion and flees from royal honour, is not the Messiah looked for in Judæa. As soon as the people are disabused of their mistake, hatred will quickly succeed to favour. The men of the schools and the rulers do not share the general enthusiasm. We are about to see the Pharisaic party, even in Galilee, assuming an attitude hostile to Jesus. The first symptom of this disposition was manifested on the occasion of the healing of a paralytic at Capernaum, during one of the short sojourns of Jesus in that city. One day, when He was surrounded by a crowd gathered from all the country round, He entered into a house to teach. A palsied man was brought to be healed; his bearers, unable to reach the entrance because of the densely

<sup>1</sup> Luke v. 12-16; Mark i, 40-45; Matt. viii. 1-4.

pressing throug, thought of the expedient of opening the movable trap-door often found in the roofs of oriental houses; by this bold stroke they succeeded in placing their sick friend at the feet of the prophet. Touched with this act of faith, Jesus begins His work of healing first on the soul. "Son," he says to the paralytic, "thy sins are forgiven thee." The Pharisees exclaim at the blasphemy, and their irritation is increased when they see the impotent man rise and take up his bed. Nothing could make them more indignant than this claim of the new Teacher to effect direct reconciliation with God, without any respect to their traditions and their rights. They were yet more incensed against Him when, two days after, He openly called Levi, the tax-gatherer, a man in whom they saw the hireling of the oppressors of their country, into the ranks of His disciples. Jesus would not be deterred by any such consideration from receiving a man, who was willing to renounce every worldly advantage, to be His disciple. When the Pharisees murmured at Him for sitting at meat with a publican, He met them with the wonderful answer, "They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."<sup>1</sup> The old adversaries of the Baptist did not hesitate now to bring forward his example, and to reproach Jesus by the asceticism of this son of the desert. "Can the children of the bridechamber fast while

<sup>1</sup> Luke v. 31, 32.



the bridegroom is with them?" He rejoins. With Messiah begins the holy union between the soul and God, so often declared by the prophets. This first hour of spiritual espousals must needs be one of joy. A sorrowful moment will soon come; there are sure tokens of it already in the malice of the rulers of the hierarchy, ever ready to break forth on every occasion. Besides, Jesus in His delicate and skilful teaching, proportions His precepts to the capacity of His disciples. To summon them at once to all the severities of a crucified life would be to pour the new wine into the old bottles.<sup>1</sup>

The question of Sabbath observance could not fail to present itself in Galilee as in Judæa. The disciples are denounced with much indignation as violators of the Law of God, because they pluck some ears of corn to appease their hunger on the day of rest. Jesus appeals from this fastidious and hypocritical legislation to the spirit of the Law itself; He adduces the example of David, who did not scruple to give his companions the sacred bread from the altar to eat. "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."<sup>2</sup> The Pharisees, by their narrow interpretation of the fifth commandment, made a sort of idol of it, to which they voluntarily sacrificed human life without any profit to the soul, for in reality their insistence on the literal observance led to the moral violation of

<sup>1</sup> See Luke v. 33; Matt. ix. 14-17; Mark ii. 18-22.

<sup>2</sup> Mark ii. 27; Luke vi. 1-5.

the Divine law contained in the great declaration, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice."<sup>1</sup> If the Sabbath was made for man, it belongs to the representative head of the new humanity so to regulate its observance that it shall not be diverted from its proper end. "The Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day."<sup>2</sup> All the theology of St. Paul lies in germ in these profound words, of which we shall find the admirable commentary in the Sermon on the Mount.

Jesus does more than offer an apology for His disciples; He boldly asserts His right as Master of the Sabbath. In a full synagogue, at the very hour of the reading of the sacred books, a paralysed man is placed in the middle of the assembly, and Jesus heals Him publicly. That His meaning may not be mistaken, He affirms His right with singular energy, not unmingled with grief and indignation. Surely, if it is permitted to draw an ass out of a pit on the Sabbath day, it cannot be unlawful to heal a man made in the image of God. He was indeed right; such an argument was irrefragable. The Pharisees could not evade it; so, leaving the ground of open discussion, they had recourse to artifice and plots. In Galilee they sought allies in the party of the Herodians, with whom they had some political affinities, because they upheld a power different from that of the Romans. From this moment Jesus could foresee the approaching end of His popularity. Without abandoning His public work among His

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xii. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Luke vi. 5.

countrymen, He begins to devote Himself increasingly to His disciples. The further the old theocracy is estranged from Him, the closer He draws to that new religious body which He has instituted. To this period belong the choice of the Apostles and the Sermon on the Mount.

## II. Choice of the Twelve Apostles.

It is not needful for us to enter here on the true meaning of the apostolic institution; let us content ourselves with seeking out the motives which guided Jesus in the selection of these twelve men, destined to become the first nucleus and the ideal representation of the Church.<sup>1</sup> An apostle was not simply called to be the disseminator of a doctrine; his mission was to lay the foundations of a religion. Neither personal attachment nor hardy zeal was enough for such a task; it needed that an apostle should have the very mind of Jesus, that absolute disinterestedness which makes the life one great self-sacrifice. The office of an apostle was in its very essence martyrdom. Nothing can excel the beautiful simplicity of its appointment. Its grandeur was purely spiritual; it was not therefore inaugurated with pomp like the Levitical priesthood. And yet what magnificence of the ancient worship could surpass the solemnity of that sacred hour, when Jesus, after passing the night in prayer, on one of the hills which surround Capernaum, called

<sup>1</sup> Matt. x. 1-15; Mark iii. 13-19; Luke vi. 12-16.

His twelve apostles? He did not choose them from the high orders of the hierarchy, or among the representatives of the religious learning of His time; He took them from the common people—rough, ignorant men, more accustomed to work with their hands than to use their intellect, but characterised by the childlike freshness and uprightness of simple souls. No doubt He found in them more than one prejudice to be destroyed, but at least their moral being had not been falsified and corrupted by artificial culture; their conscience was not stifled under the heavy armour of Pharisaic tradition; these truthful natures could readily receive the impress of the teaching, and yet more of the personal character of Jesus. About to lay the foundation of the great edifice designed to shelter so many generations, He sought as it were in the midst of the masses of the people, the block of virgin marble to be fashioned to His will. Apart from this, the most remarkable gifts of heart and mind had been dispensed to these twelve men.

We are already acquainted with the principal of them, in the first rank of whom stand the two sons of Jonas—Simon, surnamed Peter, and Andrew, both natives of Bethsaida. They had been twice called by the Master before this august day. If the figure of Andrew fades into dimness beside that of his brother, he retains, nevertheless, the honour of having been the first to hail Jesus,<sup>1</sup> and he ever

<sup>1</sup> John i. 40.

shows himself zealous in His service.<sup>1</sup> Peter's is a nature ardent, sincere, impressible, capable of passing in an instant from enthusiasm to depression ; in him is found that bold spirit of the pioneer which, when purified in the crucible of trial and repentance, will make him the man of action and preponderating influence in the first period of the apostolic age. He comes fresh from his fisherman's boat, though both he and his brother have been disciples in the school of John the Baptist. The sons of Zebedee come to Jesus in the same way. They have yet much to learn, and, first of all, the humility which renounces all eagerness for precedence, alike in the church and in the world ;<sup>2</sup> they are as yet very far from that charity which can pardon all things, even insult offered to the Master. Their love to Jesus is sometimes ready to break into violence ;<sup>3</sup> but, when purged from this human admixture, it will burn with purest light. James will be the first to shed his blood for the Gospel, and John will be the beloved disciple. His development will be at once the slowest and the most complete, for it is he who is to be the depositary of the deepest thoughts of the Master, and who, in the evening of the apostolic age, is to utter the closing words of revelation—those words of love which are the epitome of the whole, and which he learnt on the very bosom of his Lord. Philip, and Nathanael surnamed Bartholomew, are

<sup>1</sup> Mark xiii. 3 ; John xii. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Mark x. 35-37.

<sup>3</sup> Mark iii. 9-17.

also disciples from the first. Matthew, called only a few days before from the receipt of custom, is still wholly imbued with the piety of a Jew of the old dispensation, and his great concern will always be to find out the relation between the two covenants. Thomas bears some resemblance to Peter; we mark in him the same impetuosity, the same devoted affection, sometimes capable of rising into heroism; but he is often at fault, and only recovers himself by his ardent impulses.<sup>1</sup> We know nothing definite about Judas, who appears to be the same as Thaddeus or Lebbaeus, and who was probably the brother of James, the son of Alphæus.<sup>2</sup> Neither of these takes any marked position in the church of the first century. The surname of Zelotes, given to Simon, leads to the supposition that that apostle had already shown the ardent zeal which, some years later, was to give birth to a new party in Galilee. He was a native of Cana.

The name of Judas Iscariot stands out with lurid distinctness in this catalogue of the apostles. The twelfth apostle appears to have been of a strong and passionate nature, as is proved by his tragical end. Probably he had attached himself to Jesus with extraordinary ardour, hoping to find in Him the Messiah of his theocratic dreams, and uniting ambitious views with a sincere attachment to His person. It was for the future to show if the dark passions latent within him would yield to the influence of

<sup>1</sup> John xi. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Jude i.

Jesus. In the heart of every man a demoniacal force lies dormant; it is for him to quell or unloose it. The higher he has been raised in spiritual privilege, the more terrible will be his fall. He who is not transformed by contact with perfect holiness, sinks to the depths of the abyss, and no man could be more akin to a devil than a perverted apostle.<sup>1</sup>

The twelve were not all in indigence. The mother of John ministered to Jesus of her substance.<sup>2</sup> Peter and Andrew had a house at Capernaum;<sup>3</sup> Matthew gave a feast to the Master.<sup>4</sup> But it is clear, nevertheless, that the apostles belonged to the lower class, and were to the Jews at Jerusalem despised provincials, whose very speech was open to ridicule. They were accounted unlearned and ignorant men.<sup>5</sup> Celibacy was plainly not required of them, for it is certain that Peter was married,<sup>6</sup> and this may have been the case with others. In the company of pious women who followed Jesus, even to the foot of the cross, were Salome, the mother of James and John, and Mary, the mother of James the Less.<sup>7</sup> Thus, in the very dawn of the new religion, appears that type of the Christian mother, one of the most beautiful creations of the Gospel.

There must be no misconception as to the spiritual

<sup>1</sup> John vi 70.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. ix. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Luke viii. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Acts iv. 13.

<sup>7</sup> Mark xv. 40.

<sup>3</sup> Mark i. 29.

<sup>6</sup> Mark i. 30.

state of these young men at the time they were chosen; they were still very ignorant, infected with Jewish prejudices, incapable of rising to the sublime thoughts of their Master. They were "fools and slow of heart to believe;"<sup>1</sup> thus they often saddened the heart of Jesus, though they could not exhaust His patience in the work of their religious education. This work was not to be fully accomplished till He should have gone away from them, and the Holy Spirit should have come, with the chastening influence of trial, to guide them into all truth.

### III. Sermon on the Mount.

It was a few days after the choice of His apostles that Jesus delivered the discourse generally known as the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>2</sup> The Sermon on the Mount is the charter of the kingdom of God, as it was set up by Jesus Christ. Between the legislation of Sinai and this new legislation, the contrast is complete; and yet the latter was the legitimate outgrowth of the former.

We are no more in the burning desert, at the foot of lightning-crowned Horeb, in a land of terror, where the Divine voice reverberates like thunder among the arid rocks. Jesus is seated on a grassy elevation, which by a gentle incline slopes down to the Lake of Tiberias. The heights of Hattin; to which tradition assigns this great Gospel scene,

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxiv. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. v. to viii.



command the enchanting landscape of the country of Genesaret. Every utterance of nature is peace and love, and nothing is more easy than to picture to one's self the Master in such a scene, surrounded by His twelve apostles and addressing the multitude seated on the flowery turf. His first word is not a threat, but a blessing. The new law is not, like the old, a terrible manifestation of Divine holiness, flashing on the eyes of men in condemnatory and unapproachable purity. No; it is in its very essence grace and pardon; He who proclaims it is the Saviour of mankind. And yet the beatitudes must needs have been preceded by the terrors and thunders of the old covenant; they stand in necessary connection with the work of Moses, Elias, and John the Baptist—with the stern teaching of these great preachers of repentance, themselves great penitents; they commend themselves only to men whose hearts have been broken beneath the rod, and who have been disabused of the illusions of pride in the stern school of Sinai. These calm and holy words are, in their essence, a declaration of war against degenerate Judaism, for they overthrow all its idols, and set aside all its aims. Every beatitude has a corresponding anathema. The Sermon on the Mount is not the opening of an idyll; it is the prelude of a drama, of a conflict; thus from its commencement it has a tone of solemn warning. On these enchanted shores of the Sea of Galilee we see again *the burning bush*, out of which speaks the High and

Holy One. The God of sovereign compassion is also "a consuming fire."

The plan of the discourse is as simple as it is sublime. Jesus declares the conditions of entrance into the new kingdom. It opens not its gates to the men of riches, or noisy mirth, to the proudly self-complacent, nor to hard and violent and bitter souls. Poverty of spirit, penitential tears, hunger and thirst after righteousness, the sweetness which exhales from a broken heart, like the perfume from a crushed flower, the mercy which makes peace, the simple uprightness of souls made pure—such are the dispositions of the children of this kingdom. In other words, that which constitutes the right of entrance, that which gives a share in its consolations, in its triumphs, in its plenitude of life, in its forgivenesses, that which ensures the vision of God, and makes us His children and His heirs, is just that which is most opposed to the cherished dreams of the Jews. Instead of the pride which numbers its good works, self-abasing humility is alone acceptable with God. "Blessed are the poor in spirit; blessed are they that weep, for they shall be comforted." Such words are truly kingly in their surprising boldness. He who dares so to speak in a world of sorrow must be a madman or a God. The opposition between such a doctrine and current ideas is so absolute, that he who accepts it must needs resign himself at once to opprobrium and persecution. "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all

manner of evil against you, falsely, for my name's sake." Thus the beatitudes begin with weeping, and are sealed with blood. These small and weak ones of the earth are called to the most terrible conflict, to the most heroic endurance; their only crown on earth will be the crown of the martyr. Such is this octave of beatitudes, as Bossuet beautifully expresses it.

After pointing out the conditions of entrance into His kingdom, Jesus traces, in a few words, the noble mission of the new Israel: it is to be the light to lighten the world, and the salt to preserve it from corruption. Then He declares the law of His kingdom, showing that, far from destroying the old covenant, it truly accomplishes it, by supplementing all its imperfections. Instead of lessening moral obligation, it extends it, carrying it into the inner region of the heart. Thus He severs Himself from the Pharisees, whose constant endeavour was to multiply outward observances, so as the better to evade the law of inward holiness. Jesus ascends to the essence of the crimes proscribed in the law, and manifests it to the conscience in those stirrings of hatred and lust, which the rigorous observer of the letter indulged without scruple. He puts lying on the same level as perjury, and brands all those forms of speech which would seem to countenance the idea that strict truthfulness is not always a sacred duty. For the law of retaliation, He substitutes the great *commandment* of true charity, which returns benefits

for injuries and wrongs. "Whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. Love your enemies. Bless them that curse you. Pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." The new law is formed on the eternal type of good; it springs from this as from its source. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to shine upon the evil and the good, and sendeth rain upon the just and the unjust." This divine principle puts to flight all the casuistic sophistries of Pharisaism.

Spurious devotion is denounced as unsparingly as spurious righteousness. The noisy almsgiving which seeks applause, the long prayers which are only vain forms, the ostentatious fast which receives its reward in the admiration it calls forth—all these mendacities of a hypocritical religiousness are brought to the light. This wonderful picture abounds in sketches to the life. They were well known in Jerusalem, those hypocrites, who made a show of their piety in the synagogue and in the streets, sounding before them the trumpet of their pretended good works. How inimitable in force and originality are the directions of Jesus as to the exercise of true piety! "When thou doest thine alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth. When thou

prayest, use not vain repetitions as the heathen do: When thou fastest, anoint thine head and wash thy face." No man cast a more scornful glance on the whole world than the Jew; he avenged himself for his state of servitude by the implacable hatred with which he regarded the rest of mankind. Tacitus was not wrong when he reproached the Jew with being a hater of the human race. "Thou hypocrite," said Jesus, "first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."

The latter part of His Sermon on the Mount is characterised by growing severity; after painting in one stroke the false prophet, who, under the sheep's clothing, is a devouring wolf, Jesus puts his finger on the mortal unsoundness of that false Judaism which He is come to abolish. Its condemnation is that it is no longer anything but a form and a formula, and does not carry out in reality the truth which it proclaims. It is not enough to say, Lord, Lord; he must *do* the will of God, who would dare to stand in the judgment at the last day. Houses built upon a rock can alone resist the tempest. All those who having heard the word of God do not conform their lives to it, have built their houses upon the sand, and will see them fall at the first shock of the storm. Thus everything in the Sermon on the Mount points to a living and spiritual law. It contains the most emphatic protest against the falsehoods and fictions of *Pharisaism*; it inaugurates the true spiritual

worship which is alone worthy of God. By that which it overthrows, and that which it establishes, this sermon, which has been said to preach only a purified Judaism, unfurls the standard of the new covenant; the sovereign authority with which it accredits Jesus is compatible only with His incomparable dignity as Son of Man and Son of God.

## *PREPARATION OF THE CRISIS IN GALILEE.*

### *I. Sojourn at Nain.*

**T**HE Sermon on the Mount would have of itself sufficed to render impossible any reconciliation between Jesus Christ and the official representatives of the Jews' religion. Every step of His progress will now hasten the moment when the people in their turn will abandon Him, because He never panders to their prejudices. Touched by the unfeigned faith of a centurion of Capernaum, whose servant He heals, He declares that the Gentiles will soon press before the children of Abraham into the kingdom of God.<sup>1</sup> The coming of the messengers whom John the Baptist, in an hour of depression and doubt, sends to Jesus from the depths of the prison, leads Him to describe the mission of the Forerunner; He concludes by addressing a severe rebuke to the men of His generation, who had shown equal indifference to the stern and thrilling appeal of the Baptist and to the gentle message of the Gospel, and had turned away alike from the merciful Comforter and the ascetic prophet. "But wisdom is justified by her works." Divine truth bears its own witness, and can dispense with the approval of men. Such words leave a sting of irritation in the hearers' hearts.

<sup>1</sup> Matthew viii. 11.

In the eyes of the Pharisee, infatuated with his own virtues and merits, pardon granted to great sinners is a personal offence, for it seems to him to derogate from his high rank, and puts on a level with him those whom he regards with scorn. Jesus encountered this odious prejudice face to face on one memorable occasion. He was spending a few days in the little city of Nain,<sup>1</sup> situated at the foot of Tabor, in a fertile and smiling plain. His arrival at this spot was at once signalised by a great miracle. He met at the gates of the city one of those funeral processions, which everywhere remind us of the solemn end of life. This time it combined all the elements of sorrow; the mortal remains of a young man, the only son of a widow, cut off in the flower of his days, were being carried to the tomb; behind the bier came the weeping mother, bowed down under her heavy grief. Touched with divine compassion, Jesus gave back the son to his mother.<sup>2</sup> This miracle naturally produced an immense sensation. A large crowd was present at its performance, and the scenes already witnessed at the gates of Capernaum were re-enacted at Nain, as the whole town ran thither bringing the sick and the possessed.

To this motley group a woman joined herself who had no need of bodily healing; she was a sinner whose beauty had been her bane. The look of Jesus touched her to the soul; perhaps she was present

<sup>1</sup> It was there He was met by the messengers of John the Baptist.

<sup>2</sup> Luke vii. 13.



when with sorrowful pity in His eyes He bent over the bier of the dead, and the same glance fell upon her, full of reproach and sadness, but also of pardon. The cold and obtrusive virtue of the Pharisee irritated her without kindling the blush of shame, but under the pure and pitiful gaze of Jesus, her burden became intolerable; she sounded the depths of the abyss into which she had fallen, and felt herself at the same time irresistibly drawn to that Holy One, who she knew would not repulse her. Listening to nothing but the cry of her conscience and the impulse of her heart, she resolves, through all difficulties and at any cost, to go to Jesus. Little does it matter to her that at this very moment He is seated at the table of a stony-hearted Pharisee, who may perchance drive her from his doors; she braves all scorn, and throws herself at the feet of Jesus; she bathes them with very precious ointment, washes them with her tears, and wipes them with the hairs of her head. This unhappy woman repents with all the passionate fervour of her soul, and thirsting for pardon, restoration and purity, she seeks them at the feet of Jesus. Host and Saviour appear, each in his true character; the Pharisee murmurs, while Jesus welcomes this blighted but broken heart; He reserves His severity for the man of credit and distinction, well knowing the dead heart within him. Simon had received the Saviour with cold condescension, without offering Him any of the tokens of respect and affection which comported with Eastern hospitality; his one design

was to observe Jesus with an eye of malice, as is proved by his readiness to conclude, from His gentleness to the "woman which was a sinner," that He was no prophet. This woman, on the other hand, has crossed the threshold of that home, profoundly conscious of her degradation, and earnestly eager to break with sin. Her gratitude is proportioned to the greatness of her repentance, as the Master shows in His wonderful parable of the two creditors. It is easy to perceive, from the example of the Pharisee, that the man to whom little has been given loves little; he repels pardon as an insult, and abides in his impotent pride. Penitent hearts, on the contrary, break and flow forth at the feet of Jesus, like the box of ointment which has just been poured over them. In this short hour, the sinner has loved much, for she knows what she is—a woman erring, and justly despised—and she knows too who He is, who, instead of repulsing, deigns to raise her. Therefore, according to the words of the Saviour, she has much forgiven. This pardon granted to a courtesan, and in such a house, is a crying scandal to all the Pharisaic party, and it will be deeply avenged.

That which happened at Nain recurred again and again. Jesus attracted those whom the world repelled. The despised and degraded came to Him in throngs, because they knew that He would welcome the sinner while He rebuked the sin. Nothing better marks the contrast between this infinite compassion and the harshness of the Pharisee, than

the simple words of Luke: "Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him; and the Pharisees and scribes murmured."<sup>1</sup> Jesus answered these murmurers by His most touching parables. To go into the wilderness, seeking in weariness and pain the poor lost sheep, and forgetting in care for it the ninety and nine which had stayed in the fold—is not this the very work of Christ? Under this tender and beautiful image the early Church loved to represent Him, and when she would epitomise the Gospel in one eloquent symbol, she sketched on the sombre walls of the catacombs the figure of the Good Shepherd. The similitude of the lost piece of money expresses the same idea. The parable of the prodigal son is the most pathetic representation of repentance, and raises the purest ideal of the Fatherhood. It closes with a severe rebuke to Pharisaic Judaism; it was impossible not to recognise its likeness in the elder son, of correct life but cold heart, the envious observer of the scene of reconciliation. The parable remarkably widens its horizon at its conclusion, for it intimates the return of the Gentile races to the Father's house, and the abrogation of the privileges of the chosen people. The faithful type of the latter was given in that proud and self-complacent virtue, which could count its merits and closely calculate its returns, while beside it flowed the tears of holy penitence.

<sup>1</sup> Luke xv. 1, 2.

## II. Various Parables and Miracles.

The animosity of the Pharisees was displayed on all occasions. Thus, after the cure of a blind and deaf demoniac, they endeavoured, under the influence of some allies from Jerusalem, to throw discredit on the miracles of Jesus by ascribing them to the occult influence of devils; they were met by this unanswerable question: "How can Satan cast out Satan? A house divided against itself cannot stand, but is brought to nought."<sup>1</sup> From self-defence Jesus passes to direct attack. So to misconstrue His character and work as to make Him the agent of devils, is to insult God in Him, and actually to blaspheme the Divine Spirit who animates all His holy life. If there be an unpardonable sin, it is assuredly this; for to attribute to devils the very work of salvation is to show an absolute incapacity for understanding or appreciating the blessing. The refusal of God's pardon can take no more fearful form; it is the very consummation of perdition.

In spite of the malice which would soon assume a form of fierce opposition, Jesus pursued His ministry, healing and instructing the multitudes, but reserving for His disciples those deeper teachings, which demanded a more earnest and thoughtful attention than would be given by a moving crowd. To this period belongs His series of parables on the kingdom of God. The similitude of the sower describes the various effects of the preaching which

<sup>1</sup> See Matt. xii. 24, 25; Luke xi. 14-20.

is designed to lay the foundation of the kingdom. The divine word is sown like grain, which fructifies or remains unfruitful according to the nature of the soil which receives it. Everything depends on the moral disposition; the soul, according to the manner in which it listens, may resemble the stony ground, or the trodden highway where no seed can germinate, or the field of thorns and thistles, or the good ground, which from a single grain brings forth a hundred-fold.<sup>1</sup> The kingdom of God, thus founded by the Word, may at any time be invaded by evil influences; tares are but too often sown in the field of God while the servants of the Father are slumbering and sleeping. If the tares are not at once uprooted, it is because it does not appertain to man to distinguish with perfect certainty between the tares and the wheat. Both must await the time of harvest and the unerring eye of the Master.<sup>2</sup> The parable of the net which gathers of all sorts from the sea, carries on the same thought under a new figure, and having especial reference to the final judgment. The fishers, throwing back into the water the stones and the sand, enact the same part as the reapers in the previous parable. In spite of this inevitable and temporary admixture of good and evil, the kingdom of God is destined to a glorious development, like the grain of mustard seed, which is in its beginning the least of all seeds, but grows to a great and wide

<sup>1</sup> See Matt. xiii. 3; Mark iv. 3; Luke viii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xiii. 25-30.      <sup>3</sup> Mat. xiii. 47-53.

tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches of it.<sup>1</sup> The parable of the leaven, leavening little by little the whole lump into which it has been cast, gives us the most faithful conception of the irresistible and pervasive influence of truth, which works only by persuasion, never by recourse to force and pressure from without.<sup>2</sup> The truth, destined to so great a triumph, is worth its price; it is the pearl, or the hidden treasure, to gain which a man goes and sells all that he has.<sup>3</sup>

The education of the disciples could not be properly completed without the teachings of experience; thus one of the principal means employed by Jesus to prepare them for their future mission was to make them the companions of His journeys. Practical lessons arose from each new incident; the most precious of all was the sight of His unwearying love and entire devotedness to His high vocation. Wishing to go over the eastern shores of the sea of Galilee, He entered into a fishing-boat with the twelve. The weather is very changeable on this mountain-girt lake, over which storms often sweep down suddenly. Jesus was lying asleep, "in the hinder part of the ship," when a violent tempest broke without warning upon the waters; awaked by the cries of His disciples, He rebuked the waves.<sup>4</sup>

No sooner had He set foot on the coast than the occasion of a new miracle presented itself. On the

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xiii. 31, 32.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xiii. 44-46.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xiii. 33.

<sup>4</sup> Luke viii. 22-25.

eastern shore the landscape wears an entirely new aspect; there is no longer a level flowery path, skirting smiling hills; abrupt and rocky, the shore rises from the margin of the lake; numbers of natural caves are hollowed out in the mountain-sides. The whole country is wild and stern; its inhabitants then, as now, owned little subjection to law. They carried on without scruple a forbidden traffic, keeping herds of swine on their hills.<sup>1</sup> It was here that Jesus encountered the most terrible instance of possession with which He had yet come in contact. The unhappy man believed himself the victim of a multitude of demons. Hence the strange name of *Legion*, by which he designated them. His hair and beard hung long and dishevelled; in the agony of his terrible delusion, he went about unclothed, seeking refuge in the caverns and among the tombs, which seemed to him the natural abode of devils. He had doubtless learned from his contemporaries to identify the powers of darkness with the wandering spirits of the dead. In vain had he been "bound with chains and in fetters; he brake the bands and was driven of the devil into the wilderness." The cure of this man is attended with circumstances wholly inexplicable. According to our evangelists, his madness was communicated to a herd of swine, which were feeding by the lake.<sup>2</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> Luke viii. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Luke viii. 26-29; Mark v. 1-20; Matt. viii. 28-34. Matthew speaks of the healing of two demoniacs at Gadara instead of one.

inhabitants of this region deserved the punishment which they received for pursuing an illicit traffic. In their sordid avarice they did not hesitate to repel Jesus from their shores, and thus from the very first day forfeited all the blessings of His presence.

The eagerness of the Galilean people to welcome His return was a well-timed consolation for the mournful result of this enterprise. His popularity had not yet begun to ebb; He still had adherents among the highest ranks of the nation. A ruler of the synagogue of one of those little sea coast towns, named Jairus, came to Him by the shore of the lake, and was not afraid to ask of Him urgently and openly the recovery of his little daughter. As Jesus was going with him, a poor woman, who had been a sufferer many years, came behind Him, and with a trembling hand touched His garment. Her trust in His power was so strong, that she believed it would be enough to approach Him and she would be healed. Jesus, looking at her faith rather than at her ignorance, which was still great, and mingled with much superstition, suffered her to be healed by the means she had chosen, but laid stress at the same time on the moral act.<sup>1</sup> When He reached the house of Jairus, the rites over the dead had already begun; the court resounded with funeral hymns and noisy lamentations, according to the wont of those southern lands, where all the feelings of the soul are expressed with scenic display.

<sup>1</sup> "Thy faith hath saved thee." (Luke viii. 48.)



“Why make ye such ado, and weep?” said Jesus, to those who were standing round; “she is not dead but sleepeth.” In spite of the derision of the mourners, who know beyond a question that the young girl has breathed her last, He ascends with His three most intimate disciples into the upper room where the child is laid, already habited for the tomb; He bids her arise, and restores her to her father, who himself has never doubted since the Master bade him fear nothing, only believe. “According to his faith it was done unto him.”

The apostles now know enough of their Master, of His doctrine, and His power, for Him to submit them to a severe ordeal. He sends them as His representatives to declare to their countrymen that the time is fulfilled. He does not desire them to go beyond the national circle by which their thoughts are still bounded. If He sent them among the Gentiles, or even the Samaritans, He would be giving them a commission to which they were as yet wholly unequal. For the present they have to learn by their own experience to what the witnesses of Christ are called, and the manner of their mission is laid down in living outline by the directions of the Master. An apostle is to go forth without money and without a sword; he is the champion of the invisible world, the soldier of a cause which asks no earthly weapons for its warfare. And yet he is invested with incomparable power. When he enters a house, he brings *peace to it*, but he leaves a blessing or curse according

as his message is received or rejected. Woe to the towns against which he is bidden to shake off the dust of his feet.<sup>1</sup> All unarmed as he is, he is none the less sent forth into a terrible conflict. He is a lamb in the midst of wolves. Such a testimony as his must needs be sealed by suffering and often by death. "Men shall deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake, and for a testimony against them and the Gentiles."<sup>2</sup> The servant is not greater than his lord; and they have called the master of the house Beelzebub. "Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake." Yet more; it is not necessary for the condemnation of the servants of Christ that they should have kings and councils against them; they will find hatred seated by their own hearths; the sword of the Spirit severs the most tender and sacred ties; a great fire has just been kindled to consume iniquity, and no man shall be able to quench it. It is not peace, but a sword, which Jesus brings to the world.<sup>3</sup> Those who enrol themselves under such a leader must be ready to sacrifice the most cherished affections. The cross must be borne day by day by the true disciple, before it is planted in the earth to be watered by his blood.<sup>4</sup> Yet let the witnesses of Christ go forth fearing nothing. They are His representatives; whatever is done to them is done to

<sup>1</sup> Matt. x. 9-15.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. x. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. x. 34.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. x. 39.

Himself, and He will repay a glass of water given to them, as though it had refreshed His own thirsty lips.<sup>1</sup> The Spirit of God rests upon them; He will speak through their mouth when they are brought before tribunals and the great ones of the earth; a tender Providence watches over their lot; not a hair of their head shall fall without permission; and when they have confessed Jesus before men, He will confess them before His Father, and shame and suffering shall be exchanged for eternal glory.<sup>2</sup> An army thus recruited is indeed worthy of the Divine Head, of whom it has been truly said that He is stronger than all they that can be against Him. St. Paul epitomises in his own manner the whole of this charge of Jesus to His disciples when he says: "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal."<sup>3</sup> The execution of John the Baptist, which took place at this time, confirmed all that Jesus had said as to the cost of being a faithful confessor of the truth. If it was needful to suffer so much in order to prepare the way of Christ, what must be looked for by His own disciples?

The apostles did not indeed, on this first journey, endure much reproach or persecution. The mission with which Jesus had charged them had been proportioned to their weakness; they were not called to combat with any strong prejudices, since they addressed only Jews by birth, and did not go beyond a general announcement that Messiah had appeared.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. x. 40-42.<sup>2</sup> Matt. x. 32.<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. x. 4.

This first mission, incomplete as it was, taught them to proclaim without fear what they knew of truth. As their knowledge deepened, their testimony would become more fraught with peril. Let us admire this wisdom of the Master, who trained them for their mission gradually, and by divine methods, adapted to their moral condition. We do not know how long this first journey lasted, but we know that during its progress the apostles wrought various miracles,<sup>1</sup> were received everywhere with eager welcome, and returned full of joy and confidence. No doubt to their preaching may be attributed the revival of enthusiasm in favour of Jesus, which is noticeable at this period in Galilee. It was, however, of short duration, and we are approaching a decisive crisis.

<sup>1</sup> Mark vi. 13 ; Luke ix. 6.

## *THE CRISIS OF FAITH IN GALILEE.*

### **I. The Multiplication of the Loaves at Bethsaida Julias.**

**W**E know already with what feelings the Pharisees regard the new doctrine. If the mass of the Galilean population is not yet unfavourable to Jesus, there is more than one indication that it may easily become so. Are not the multitude ever unstable as water, and blown about by the most variable winds? In one city Jesus already meets with violent opposition; this is in the town where He passed His childhood. In vain does He make a fresh appeal to His countrymen in the same synagogue where He had before been so ill received. His fellow-townsmen are always stumbled by His obscure origin; they cannot believe that from the workshop of the carpenter Joseph, and from the midst of that humble family of artisans, known to all the town, Messiah could arise, as though the excellency of Divine power was not enhanced by these very contrasts. Jesus withdrew from them sorrowfully, repeating the often-verified proverb: "A prophet is not without honour save in his own country."<sup>1</sup> Capernaum, the city of His adoption, became only too soon the rival of Nazareth in in-

<sup>1</sup> Matthew xiii. 57.

gratitude. Jesus sought to retire into a desert place with His apostles, soon after their return from their triumphant mission. He desired, no doubt, to teach them by what means the servant of the truth escapes the pride of success, and girds himself in retirement for new conflicts. He crossed with them to the other side of the lake, into the neighbourhood of the second Bethsaida, or Bethsaida Julias. The country was much less populated on this shore than in the rich district of Gennesaret. Jesus ascended a mountain with His disciples.<sup>1</sup> He might have been about to confirm them in their apostolic office, now they better knew what was involved in it. But soon there arrived from the opposite shore a great number of people who had not hesitated to follow Jesus on foot,<sup>2</sup> so eager were they to hear His word, and yet more to see His miracles. It was a mingled multitude of men, women, and children, with the ordinary contingent of sufferers in various need of healing.

It was spring time, for the Passover was nigh at hand,<sup>3</sup> and the crowd sat down on the green grass. Jesus was moved with compassion for the multitudes whom He saw "scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd."<sup>4</sup> Words of mercy flowed freely from His lips.<sup>5</sup> "He laid hands upon the sick and they recovered."<sup>6</sup> Hours passed away—a very day of heaven upon earth; no one thought of the necessities

<sup>1</sup> John vi. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xiv. 13.

<sup>3</sup> John vi. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. xvi. 34.

<sup>5</sup> Mark vi. 34.

Matt. xv. 30.

of the body, and when the evening was come, and it was too late to recross the lake, the disciples become aware of a hungry, exhausted crowd, without the means of supplying their wants. What are the five barley loaves and two small fishes, which a lad has brought in his basket, among five thousand men? It is too late to think of going into the towns and villages to buy bread; beside, the money is wanting. The disciples would gladly send away the multitude; but Jesus, so tender over the miseries of the soul, cannot be callous to the claims of the body; no suffering is indifferent to him: His love deserves truly that beautiful name of *humanity*, which implies sympathetic succour for all human griefs. Thus He does not hesitate to work a miracle to appease the hunger of the famished crowd. He who refused in the wilderness to change stones into bread for His own support, multiplies with a touch the five loaves and two fishes, till the vast concourse is satisfied. None of the miracles of Jesus is more full of tender significance than this. It is the brilliant inauguration of that fruitful miracle of Christian charity, which has ever since gone on multiplying bread to the hungry. The heart of man, once touched, like the rock in the desert struck by the rod of Moses, has gone on pouring over thirsty crowds the inexhaustible stream of generosity.

The multitudes are ravished, enthusiastic; now indeed they believe they have found the Messiah after their own heart—Him who, according to the

brilliant representation of apocalyptic vision, is to make Judæa an earthly paradise, flowing literally with milk and honey, its trees bending under the prodigious weight of fruit. The people would "take him by force and make him a king;"<sup>1</sup> but He withdraws Himself from their fanatic enthusiasm, and retires into a mountain alone. He will not have even the company of His disciples; in silent communion He will prepare Himself for striking that great blow, which will dispel all these popular illusions. The apostles re-enter their boat alone, while He treads the deserted shore. But the wind begins to rise, and tosses the waves around the little vessel; the disciples are already alarmed by the storm, when they see Jesus coming to them on the waters; they are terrified, and suppose it is a spirit, till they catch the reassuring word: "It is I, be not afraid!" Then Peter, yielding to an impetuous impulse, sets his foot too upon the wave to go to meet the Master, but having more fervour than faith, he would assuredly have sunk if a helping hand had not been timely stretched out to hold him up.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps this memorable event came back to his mind in that other night, when his presumption would have led him to a yet deeper fall, if the same hand had not arrested him. This tempest-wrought lake, this tiny, tossing boat, the Master appearing, to make a great calm within and without, what a sublime parable in

<sup>1</sup> John vi. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xiv. 27. Compare Mark vi. 45-54; John vi. 15-21.



action! It is the very history of the Church in all ages. How often, at the moment when her bark has seemed to be foundering, driven by the rude wind of persecution, has she not heard again that Divine voice, mightier in its gentleness than all the thunders of the storm!

On the morrow, from the dawn of day, the lake was seen covered with a multitude of boats come from Tiberias and Bethsaida to bring back the people who the day before had followed Jesus by such toilsome marches; these eagerly entered into any vessels they could secure, so as to arrive at the same time with Him in the country of Gennesaret. Since the miracle of the loaves, their ardent impatience knew no bounds. They found the Divine prophet in the synagogue at Capernaum, for the Sabbath had begun.

The occasion was favourable for dispelling the carnal and dangerous illusions of a mistaken multitude. That such was the intention of Jesus is evident from His first words: "Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles (the signs of my mission), but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled."<sup>1</sup> It was not possible to aim a blow more bold and direct at the materialism disguised under the semblance of religion. Founding His teaching for the day on the miracle of which all minds were full, Jesus endeavours to raise them to the great spiritual realities. "Labour," He says, "not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth to ever-

<sup>1</sup> John vi. 26.

lasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you, for him hath God the Father sealed."<sup>1</sup> Miracle is a divine seal designed to make Him known; there must then be no stopping short at the material advantage which it procures, but a recognition of the august sign of the mission of the Son of Man, who alone is able to satisfy the hunger of the soul, and nourish it to life eternal. Upon this commences a brief and perfectly natural dialogue between Jesus and the people, in which the Jews give clearer expression than they have yet done to their dissatisfaction. Their objections strike, as it were, from the words of the Master, a light growing ever more intense, but also more insufferable to their darkened eyes. They ask in what the work is to consist which has eternal life for its reward? They understand the words of Christ in a mercenary sense, and imagine that the question is one of good works, alms-giving, and rites scrupulously observed. What a humiliation is it to be told that the work which saves is simply faith in Christ, the lowly surrender of the soul to Him!<sup>2</sup> Let Him then, at least, work a dazzling miracle to attest His right to such confidence. Moses brought down miraculous bread from heaven. Let Him who pretends to be the prophet like unto Moses vindicate His claim by a similar prodigy!<sup>3</sup> It is clear that those present are still engrossed with the event of the previous evening.

Jesus takes hold of this incident in the history of

<sup>1</sup> John vi. 27.    <sup>2</sup> John vi. 29.    <sup>3</sup> Deut. xviii. 18.

Israel. The manna nourished only the body, and could not preserve it from death. The true bread from heaven is that which God gives to the world; and it may be known by this, that it comes down from heaven and gives eternal life. "Evermore give us this bread," exclaim the Jews, snatching at some vague carnal hope. Jesus replies, "I am the bread of life."<sup>1</sup> Then He goes on to describe, in a few words, His mission to souls. Whoever obeys the Divine instinct which is in him, and by which God Himself draws him to the Son; whoever looks upon the Saviour with the eye of faith, has even now everlasting life, and awaits only the resurrection.<sup>2</sup>

The indignant murmuring of the Jews shows that they understood what was the supreme dignity thus claimed by this Jesus, in whom they persist in seeing the son of Joseph. Even the natural light of reason seems darkened in them; but what marvel? Does it not need a higher sense to behold divine things? God must be taken for the guide, and His voice be heard in the secret of the heart, before men come to Him who is His representative. But when His teaching is refused, He cannot be known in His highest manifestation. "No man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God; he hath seen the Father."<sup>3</sup> Again Jesus repeats, in a still more offensive form, the saying which had already exasperated His hearers: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven, and the bread which I will give

<sup>1</sup> John vi. 35.<sup>2</sup> John vi. 37, 38.<sup>3</sup> John vi. 46.

is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." In reply to a fresh murmuring of the Jews, He insists yet more emphatically on the same thought. The bread to be eaten is His immolated flesh; the drink to be drunk is His blood. Thus, He who gives life is not only a meek and lowly Messiah, but also a Messiah crucified; and this is He who must be received and appropriated by faith, as intimately as the body assimilates the bread, which becomes part of its proper substance. "He who eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life."<sup>1</sup>

These bold metaphors, so closely interwoven with the incidents of the dialogue, and with the miracle itself which called them forth, cannot be taken in a material sense. Jesus sets aside every such interpretation, when He adds: "It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing."<sup>2</sup> The thought which He presents is in its very essence an occasion of scandal and irritation. Men are asking for signs of power from Him; and here is humiliation and sacrifice. They desire to see the kingdom of God set up with sudden glory, and behold a Christ-Messiah. The work of salvation is not to consist in lofty deeds, wrought to deliver theocracy from its oppressors; heaven is not to be won by the boasted merits of legal sanctity; no; salvation is faith in this "Man of sorrows," and participation in His utter humiliation. It is true

<sup>1</sup> John vi. 54.

<sup>2</sup> John vi. 63.

that He says He is come down from heaven, and will return to heaven again; but this glory must needs be discerned by faith beneath the sanguinary veil of a broken body; and this assertion of a grandeur not to be perceived by carnal eyes, is as hard to be received as the humiliation and suffering. Assuredly it was not possible to sweep away more unsparingly the delusions of the people, or more effectually to crush all their carnal expectations. We are not surprised, then, to hear the exclamation of the listeners: "This is a hard saying!" They felt the point of the sword which Jesus came to bring into the world. No doubt they had only a cloudy comprehension of the profound doctrine He uttered, but they understood enough to be offended at it. Jesus is left standing alone, while the multitude retreat like an ebbing tide. Only one little group remains, and to this He turns, asking with an unutterable sadness in His voice: "Will ye also go away?" "Lord, to whom shall we go?" Peter exclaims: "Thou hast the words of eternal life." A noble declaration from the depth of that manly, though yet unstable heart. Thus true faith grows and strengthens in the very crisis in which all merely seeming faith succumbs. And yet at this very hour Jesus utters the boding prophecy: "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?"<sup>1</sup> It is probable that Judas himself has begun, with consternation, to see his ambitious dreams fading

<sup>1</sup> John vi. 67-71.

away, and to feel the first stirring of bitter hatred against the Master by whom he fancies himself deceived. However this may be, the hour of darkness has sounded ; the time of public favour is over ; henceforward Jesus will meet with but passing returns of popularity.

We now enter upon the second period of His ministry, which is that of declared conflict.



**Period of Conflict.**





## *JOURNEY INTO THE LANDS OF THE NORTH.*

FROM THE SPRING OF THE YEAR OF ROME 782 TO  
THE AUTUMN OF THE SAME YEAR.

### I. First proceedings of the Pharisees in Galilee.

**A**FTER what had occurred at Nazareth and Capernaum, Jesus could no longer go about Galilee as before. Thenceforward He made no lengthened stay in any place ; He only passed through the country, avoiding all large assemblies. <sup>1</sup>

The Pharisees did not fail to take advantage of the new dispositions of the people. Through the length and breadth of the country, their adherents were united in close fellowship, and communications were frequent between Jerusalem and Galilee. The chiefs of the party had sent emissaries to the shores of the Lake of Gennesaret to act as spies upon Jesus.<sup>2</sup> These knew well how to work with rare skill upon the first symptoms of popular disfavour. To serve the ends of religious hatred, the Pharisees violated without scruple the rights of hospitality so universally respected in the East. That which the

<sup>1</sup> "And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee ; and he would not that any man should know it." (Mark ix. 30.)

<sup>2</sup> Mark vii. 1.

Arab brigand would not do under his tent, they practised in their consecrated dwellings. They only invited Jesus to be their guest in order to lay snares for Him. Once, when He was sitting at table with them, they expressed clamorous indignation on seeing that He and His disciples dispensed with the absurd ceremonies, with which they had overlaid the laws concerning ablutions.<sup>1</sup> Here again their insistence upon the outward form of religion was the more resolute in proportion to their disregard of true piety. It was not enough for them to wash their hands before meat; they must needs plunge the arm up to the elbow in water, and also purify all the domestic utensils. These practices were to be observed every time they returned from the market place, because of the involuntary defilements which they might have contracted.<sup>2</sup> It well became these contemnners of the law to claim to be its defenders. "Ye reject the commandment of God," says Jesus, with just severity, "that ye may keep your own tradition."<sup>3</sup>

Contrasting eternal morality with the artificial

<sup>1</sup> I bring together here all that refers to the attempts of the Pharisees against Jesus in Galilee. We take as a foundation the narrative in Mark vii. 1-23, which evidently relates to this period. The discussion concerning ablutions is reproduced with some variations in Luke xi. 39-41. We have then the demand for a sign (Mark viii. 11, 12), which has its parallel in Luke xi. 29-32. We find an analogous account in Matthew xii. 38-42.

<sup>2</sup> Mark vii. 2-6.

<sup>3</sup> Mark vii. 9.

morality of these false devotees, He takes up the defence of those natural feelings which they unjustly accuse Him of sacrificing. Have they not taught children to fail in their first duty, authorising them to divert for the service of the altar, the consecrated gold which ought to provide for the needs of parents? With reference to ablutions, Jesus set forth with a manly simplicity the great fact, that true defilement comes not from without, but from within—from the impure fountains of the human heart, whence proceed lusts and all evil thoughts. He closes by painting in colours of fire the hypocrisy of His adversaries. We shall meet with this immortal picture of Pharisaism, in a form yet more complete and terrible, in the last discourses of Jesus. “Now,” He says, “do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also?”<sup>1</sup>

Some time after, the same emissaries from Jerusalem presented themselves anew before Jesus to ask of Him a decisive sign of His mission. The Sanhedrim thus played the part which is now demanded of our learned bodies; they required a miracle wrought before their delegates. “Jesus sighed deeply in spirit,” records the most exact of the evangelists.<sup>2</sup> Such a demand showed in truth an utter and arrant misconception of His whole

<sup>1</sup> Luke xi. 39, 40.

<sup>2</sup> Mark viii. 12.

character and mission. He is ready, indeed, to respond to the cry of the sick and the suffering who supplicate His power to heal; He listens to the voice of tears, and grants a miraculous answer of love to the appeal of faith, but He will never consent to work a prodigy in order to establish His authority before a proud hierarchy, and a people hungering only for the marvellous; such a concession might befit a magician or an impostor, but Jesus never confounds lowliness with degradation; He ever maintains the royal dignity of truth. He knows, beside, that the simply marvellous is a dazzling veil, which conceals rather than reveals, the divine, while the miracle, by its moral character, touches the well-affected heart. Therefore He refuses with indignation the request thus proffered to Him. "There shall no sign be given to this generation but the sign of the prophet Jonah." Did not the mere preaching of that prophet suffice to bring Nineveh to repentance? "Behold a greater than Jonah is here"—One greater even than the pacific king who drew the queen of Sheba from the far East to the holy city to listen to his wisdom. The conclusive sign is the character of Jesus Himself. Those who have eyes to see, and ears to hear, and hearts in which the sense of the divine is not quenched, will by this sign acknowledge Him. We are thus led into the deep truths propounded in the fourth Gospel.<sup>1</sup> The history of Jonah is to Jesus

<sup>1</sup> Luke xi. 29.

the type of His own destiny. He also is to go down into the deep places of the earth, and to come back again to the light of day. He appeals to this coming sign as the confirmation of all His teaching, and the setting as it were of the seal of God on His work.

Scenes like those which have just been narrated, were soon known throughout the country. The family of Jesus was uneasy at the growing opposition of the Jews, and at the prolonged labours which seemed likely to exhaust Him. His relatives imagined that He was losing the mastery of Himself, and that His enthusiasm was verging on madness. In truth, Jesus was infected with that generous madness of love which takes no reckoning of either pain or danger. One day, when His brethren endeavoured with ill-judged persistency to drive Him from His customary activities, He exclaimed, pointing to those who surrounded Him, and who appear to have been intently receiving the divine word: "Behold my mother and my brethren."<sup>1</sup>

The Master draws two lessons for the disciples from the events which have just passed. "Beware," He warns them, "of the leaven of the Pharisees."<sup>2</sup> Then, He adds, as though to re-assure the hearts of his timid followers, which might tremble at the thought of breaking openly with so powerful a party: "I say unto you, my friends, fear not them which

<sup>1</sup> Mark iii. 34.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. viii. 11.

kill the body, and after that have no more which they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him."<sup>1</sup>

## II. Journey into the lands of the North.

After the events just narrated, Jesus retired for a time into the parts of Tyre and Sidon. These two cities, so long eminent in commerce and in war, were to the Jewish people like the advanced posts of pagan civilisation; in their wealth and luxury they formed the strongest contrast with the Jewish nationality, inclosed within narrow boundaries, and cut off from other nations by severest restrictions. Tyre and Sidon had been great capitals of commerce; there had been developed the adventurous genius of the Phœnicians, whose vessels furrowed all known seas, to pour the treasures of the world at the feet of their monstrous idols. These cities were much fallen into decay at the time of Christ. They had lost their independence. Tyre had never recovered from the terrible siege laid against it by Alexander; Sidon, which yielded sooner, suffered less. These two cities (held, like all Eastern Asia, under the yoke of Rome) still retained some splendour, thanks to their noble situation on the shores of the Mediterranean, and the relations between them and the Jews had become frequent. Asiatic

<sup>1</sup> Luke xii. 4, 5.

paganism, the worship of infamous and cruel divinities, still exercised over them its corrupting influence. Their inhabitants were not yet ripe for the great evangelical call; Jesus only passed through their country, but His passage was marked by a miracle, which was in itself a declaration that national barriers were about to be levelled. It was not wrought, like that at Capernaum, on behalf of a Roman centurion, already a proselyte of the synagogue, and almost incorporated with the holy nation: we are no longer in Samaria, on ground half-consecrated, and still owning the worship of the one God. No; everything in these spots speaks of unblushing paganism; impure sanctuaries in honour of the Phœnician Hercules stand on all sides. By acting as Messiah on this unholy soil, Jesus makes a decisive advance, the importance of which is yet more enhanced by the attendant circumstances.

A poor woman of Canaan, who has doubtless heard the rumours of the great events which have been transpiring in Judæa, throws herself at His feet. She is a mother, supplicating for her daughter who is grievously vexed with a devil. "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David!" is her piteous cry. The Master keeps silence, till His disciples grow impatient at the importunity of the woman. Yet more and more urgently she pleads, and receives for her only answer the words: "It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to



the dogs.”<sup>1</sup> It seems as though Jesus would hold up the ancient privilege of the Jew in all its inflexible rigour, to test this daughter of an idolatrous people, and to give yet more solemn emphasis to the act He is about to perform. Never did faith show more holy hardihood than in this unhappy mother. “Truth, Lord,” she replies: “yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.” Here is, indeed, a prayer which, as has been eloquently said, is stronger than God Himself. Thrilled by so touching a confidence in His love, Jesus no longer delays to work the desired cure. Thus is the door of the Gentile world opened to the Gospel by the suppliant hands of a poor woman. This was a great day in the evangelical annals.

From Sidon Jesus repairs to the north-east of the Lake of Gennesaret, into Decapolis. This province was so called from the number of its towns, which had formed themselves into a confederation, according to the Greek custom. The Gospel assigns to this journey the healing of one deaf and dumb, and a second multiplication of the loaves, occurring in circumstances similar to those which led to it on the previous occasion.<sup>2</sup> Jesus then repairs to Bethsaida Julias, where He heals a blind man. From thence He goes northward, near the sources of the Jordan, to Cæsarea Philippi. All around this city extends the fertile plain of Hûleh, enclosed

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xv. 26.      <sup>2</sup> Adolphe Monod, *Sermon sur la Cananéenne*.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xv. 32; Mark viii. 1-9.

between the wooded mountains of Naphtali and the slopes of snowy Hermon. The Jordan divides itself into numerous streamlets, which flow among the oleanders; it then loses itself wholly in the beautiful sheet of the Lake Merom. The two principal sources of the river are at Dan and Cæsarea Philippi, the modern Banias. The imposing ruins of the latter city attest its ancient greatness. An idea may be formed of what it was in the times of Christ, by uncovering with the foot the mural fragments, which lie overgrown with luxuriant vegetation at the foot of the ravine. The tetrarch Philip greatly embellished it, and gave to it his own name; it was previously called Paneas, because the neighbouring mountain was consecrated to the god Pan. Its population was in great part pagan.

Jesus took advantage of this quiet time with His disciples, to ask them what were men's thoughts about Him in the countries through which they had just passed. The apostles replied that the people saw in Him one of the old prophets whose return was looked for at the epoch of Messiah.<sup>1</sup> "And whom say ye that I am?" asked the Master. "Thou art the Christ of God,"<sup>2</sup> exclaims Peter, in one of those ecstasies of faith which raise him for the moment above himself, and reveal that courageous ardour which characterises all mighty workers on the great heart of mankind. It is now that he receives for the second time that name which so

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xvi. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Luke ix. 20.

admirably describes him : " Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona : for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church ; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." <sup>1</sup>

This is the first mention of the Church ; its foundation was in truth laid in this recognition of the exalted dignity of Christ. Peter has spoken the word or the truth, which is its foundation, its keystone, and bulwark : this word bound or loosed, saves or condemns ; it possesses the power of the divine life which it reveals. It preserves the same character by whatever mouth it is spoken. Therefore it is, that in this same Gospel, the power of the keys, the privilege of binding and loosing, is confided, not to Peter only, but to all the disciples ; <sup>2</sup> for it is not to be supposed that a discourse, which throughout treats of the most elementary duties of the Christian life, was not addressed to all believers. Thus is wholly set aside anything like the institution of an official primacy, which would make a man the sovereign dispenser of God's pardons. To Peter belongs, nevertheless, the honour of having been the first to give utterance to the creative

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xvi. 18-20.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xviii. 18.

word of the Church, and of having displayed in action that great quality of conquering energy which really procured for him a moral supremacy at Jerusalem.

Hardly has the son of Jonas made this declaration, which called forth the signal approval of the Master, when mistaken words succeed to this noble testimony on his lips. At the first allusion of Jesus to His approaching sufferings and humiliation, the apostle protests with indignation, and draws down on himself the terrible rebuke, "Get thee behind me, Satan."<sup>1</sup> If the Church had no more stable basis than the impulsive heart of a man, it is evident how frail would be her foundation. It is a feature of the greatness of Christ, that at the very moment when His glory is proclaimed He speaks of His sacrifice. The amazement of His disciples proves how much they had need of this teaching, for if they were dimly conscious of the dignity of their Master, they were yet very far from comprehending by what a path of sorrow it was to be attained. This is the sole reason why He prohibits them from proclaiming Him as Messiah. He alone is able to assert His rightful title without conceding anything to the superstitions of His nation.

To the west of Cæsarea Philippi, the magnificent chain of Great Hermon rears itself to heaven; it commands the whole country. It was on one of the mountains which form part of this range that the

<sup>1</sup> Matthew xvi. 23.

mysterious scene of the Transfiguration took place.<sup>1</sup> Every sound of earth dies at the foot of this lofty retreat, one truly worthy of the prayer of Christ. On all sides, rugged peaks are seen rising from the middle of the plain, through which, half hidden by the tall herbage, flows the sacred stream—the witness of so many miracles. It was probably in the calm, still hour that comes before evening that Jesus ascended the mountain. He was accompanied by three of His disciples—Peter, James, and John. Suddenly His form and His raiment were enwrapt in so glistening a brightness, that in the artless expression of St. Mark, no fuller on earth could whiten them. Here is something more than that irradiation of a heavenly soul occasionally seen on a human countenance, more than one of those glances which, like lightning-flashes of the spirit, reveal its moral beauty. The Transfiguration was a manifestation of a higher order. In this marvellous light, Moses and Elias appeared, and talked with Jesus of His decease, which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. Thus, while false Judaism rejects the Messiah, the true, in the person of its two most illustrious representatives, owns and adores Him. The old covenant and the new meet together on the glorious mount, as righteousness and peace shall

<sup>1</sup> Tradition erroneously places the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor. Jesus was at this time in the neighbourhood of Cæsarea Philippi. (Matt. xiv. 13 ; comp. xvii. 1.) A fortress stood upon the summit of Tabor, which would ill accord with the scene described.

soon meet on that other hill, which is already before the eye of Jesus.

The laws which govern the world of blessed spirits lie too wholly<sup>a</sup> beyond our comprehension for us to attempt any explanation of this appearance of Moses and Elias. The apostles, doubtless, heard on their awaking, some words of this mysterious interview; they were thus enabled to recognise the two great prophets.<sup>1</sup> Peter would fain prolong this hour of heaven upon earth, and set up tents on that shining summit, but a cloud descended upon the three disciples, and they feared as they entered into it, for now it was no more Moses or Elias whom they heard, but a Divine voice, saying "This is my beloved Son: hear him."<sup>2</sup>

In what manner these ineffable things were seen and heard it is impossible to say; to the three apostles might be applied the words of St. Paul on his visions of the third heaven: "Whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body I cannot tell: God knoweth."<sup>3</sup> For the disciples, the Transfiguration was intended to illuminate with a ray of glory the dark lays that were about to begin; it was designed also to strengthen Jesus for His conflict. It was His first attack before the battle; the second would be passed at Gethsemane. This sacred scene was to be kept secret by the three apostles till after His resurrection.

We observe that the conversation takes place before the three disciples recognise Moses and Elias. (Luke ix. 31.)

<sup>a</sup> Luke ix. 35.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 3.

After a short conversation, in which He tells them that John the Baptist was indeed "Elias which was to come," He descends the mountain with them. How strong is the contrast awaiting them! Above, they had seen heaven coming down to earth; below, in the plain, they beheld one of the most fearful consequences of sin: a poor child was there, writhing in demoniac frenzy, more terrible, perhaps, in its symptoms even than that of the sufferer of Gadara, and beside him stood a despairing father, who had vainly sought aid from the disciples. They had essayed to cure the child, but could not. Hence the grief and holy indignation of the Master at their culpable impotence. "O faithless generation," He exclaimed, "how long shall I be with you?"<sup>1</sup> Even the most sacred words cannot alone exorcise the power of evil; prayer and fasting, the holy elevation of the soul which seeks its strength in God, is the secret of victory. A glorious deliverance was granted to the still tremulous, but humbly trustful faith of the poor father, who spoke that day for every troubled, trembling heart of man when he exclaimed with tears: "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."<sup>2</sup> Immediately on the conclusion of the miracle, Jesus gave a second intimation of His approaching end: "Let these sayings sink down into your ears; for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men."<sup>3</sup> Thus the most various scenes succeed each other; suffering follows glory,

<sup>1</sup> Mark ix. 19.<sup>2</sup> Mark ix. 24.<sup>3</sup> Luke ix. 44.

and sometimes goes hand in hand with it. Such is the mode and measure of the Gospel history.

A few other incidents belong to this period, in which Jesus devotes Himself with redoubled care to the education of His apostles. In their simple pride, they dispute about priority of place. The Master sets a little child in the midst of them."<sup>1</sup> Such an one is in His eyes the type of that true greatness, which consists in transparent simplicity and artless affection. "He that is least among you all," saith He, "the same shall be great."<sup>2</sup> With humility He also inculcates breadth of spirit; He will not suffer the man to be condemned who, not walking with His followers, yet works miracles in His name, for the allegiance of the soul is of more value in His eyes than the allegiance of form.<sup>3</sup> He is not come to form a sect, but a Church. Large hearts are full of kindness and pity; He desires His disciples to take especial heed lest they despise or offend one of the little ones.<sup>4</sup> Pardon extended should not be meted by scantier measure than the pardon freely received. What right has the servant, to whom his master has forgiven a mighty debt, to insist mercilessly on the payment of a few pence from his fellow-servant?<sup>5</sup> Life thus regarded is one long conflict with sin, from which the soldiers come out scarred and wounded, for the very eye must be plucked out, and foot or hand be cut off, if they

<sup>1</sup> Luke ix. 47.      <sup>2</sup> Luke ix. 48.      <sup>3</sup> Mark ix. 38-40.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. xviii. 10.

<sup>5</sup> Matt. xviii. 21-35.



cause to offend or fall.<sup>1</sup> These bold images set forth that crucifixion of the inner man, which St. Paul urges in no less emphatic language. Such a work cannot be accomplished without preternatural strength. Jesus revealed the secret of this strength to His disciples. One day, as they watched Him in prayer, they felt that they did not yet truly know what it was to pray, and asked Him to impart to them this divine lore. It was then that He gave them, not a formulary, but a perfect model of prayer in that universal petition, which for eighteen centuries has carried to heaven so many aspirations, and wrought so many deliverances in the earth.<sup>2</sup> The Lord's Prayer is unapproachable in its simplicity and completeness; it embraces all the necessities of renewed man, from the sublime need felt by the soul of blessing the heavenly Father, and concurring by obedience and holiness in the coming of His kingdom, to the lower need of daily bread. Pardon for past transgression, strength to overcome in present temptation,—all is included. Humble supplication and wrestling entreaty melt into the one final ascription of worship: "Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever." Such a prayer is like the viaticum of the Christian traveller amidst all the perils of the way.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xviii. 8, 9.<sup>2</sup> Luke xi. 1-5.

## SOJOURN AT JERUSALEM

ON THE OCCASION OF THE FEAST OF TABERNAÇLES.  
AUTUMN OF YEAR OF ROME, 782.

### I. Attitude of Jesus during the Feast.

JESUS had not revisited Jerusalem since His return into Galilee at the beginning of the year.

If He had gone thither sooner the final crisis would have been hastened, and He would not have been able to sow the seed of the word in so many towns and villages. Now, He had no fear of abridging the time of popular favour; open conflict would be better than slow alienation, paving the way for hatred. There is no reason for supposing that this stay at Jerusalem effected any change in His mind and purpose. It was not the first time He had visited the holy city, and contemplated the solemn landscape around it. Let us not exaggerate the gloom of this prospect. Doubtless, the high country of Judæa never arrayed itself in glory like Carmel and Tabor; it was never vocal with the murmuring of waters like the valley of the Jordan; but it was far from wearing, at the time of Christ, the aspect of wild desolation which it presents in our day. The Cedron was not then a dry, stony bed; it diffused fruitfulness all around. The Mount of Olives, which rose facing the Temple, had many a concealed

retreat of verdure; its summit commanded one of the grandest landscapes of Palestine, terminated on the north by the glimmering of the Dead Sea, and on the south by the blue-grey heights of Moab, often enkindled by the fiery splendours of the sun. The numerous tombs, scattered over the hill in its decline to the Valley of Jehoshaphat, did not rise then from the midst of heaps of accumulated ruins, overgrown with briars and weeds. Their white outlines dotted the verdure of the slope. Jerusalem itself was a noble city, into which a large population crowded, and which was crowned by the grand and severe proportions of the Temple. There was, then, nothing in external circumstances calculated to effect a radical change in the mind of Jesus, even were it admitted that the soul could ever be degraded into such abject subjection to natural influences. Let it be remembered, too, that the ministry of Christ began on the desolate shores of the Dead Sea, and that it was from the burning deserts of Judæa He came forth to inaugurate the year of goodwill. We know already that Jesus had not restrained till now the manifestation of what is called His mad excitement; for in Galilee He had already declared Himself to be the bread from heaven—the immortal food of the soul; already had begun that insistence upon the virtue of His own person which is made the reproach of this closing period.

The Feast of Tabernacles, which took place in *October*, was approaching; it was one of the great

religious festivals of Judaism. In memory of the wandering life of the desert, the people set up leafy booths in the streets of Jerusalem, and dwelt in them seven days. With palm branches in their hands, they walked in long processions, magnifying the goodness of God to their forefathers. Jesus did not arrive in Judæa at the commencement of the feast. He had refused to yield to the urgency of His brethren, when, in accordance with their national prejudices, they pressed Him to seize this opportunity to show Himself with power. He knew well that His enemies would be exasperated at seeing Him arrive with the caravans from Galilee, which would not fail to form a *cortège* around Him. His brethren could not foresee anything to fear in such contingencies, sharing as they did in the carnal expectations of their nation. The Master, therefore, allows Himself to be preceded at Jerusalem by His kinsfolk and disciples, while He himself follows as it were in secret.

The feast had already lasted some days when He arrived. The people were in a state of extraordinary excitement; Jesus was the subject of conversation in every group; His character and works were discussed, and according to the animus of the speakers He was pronounced to be a good man or a deceiver of the people.<sup>1</sup> Excitement reached its height when He suddenly appeared in the Temple.<sup>2</sup> As soon as He opened His mouth, His discourse was marked

<sup>1</sup> John v. 12, 13.

<sup>2</sup> John vii. 14.

by that tone of authority peculiar to Him, and which was supremely impressive in this centre of vain disputations and empty words. A dialogue commences between Him and those around Him, which indicates the various attitudes of mind, and the diverse and fluctuating impressions of His hearers. The paramount feeling is astonishment. Such divine wisdom is incomprehensible in a man who has not passed through the Rabbinical schools. Jesus tells them that His is no human and acquired learning; His doctrine is of God, and He speaks only the words of Him who sent Him. This celestial wisdom does not display itself in laboured argument; it reveals itself directly to the conscience. The man who will do the will of God shall know that the doctrine is of God, for the absolute disinterestedness of Him who proclaims it, proves that He is not seeking Himself, nor doing His own work, but that He is indeed the organ of divine love. Jesus appeals, according to His invariable wont, from the tortuous scholasticism of the doctors to the true intuition of the soul.<sup>1</sup>

The Master probably discerns in the crowd some of those Jews, who had been scandalised by the miracle wrought at Bethesda. He knows that in opposition to the verdict of the upright conscience which He claims, they set His pretended violation of the Sabbath; they dispute His true holiness in the name of artificial and conventional piety. He meets their thoughts in a direct and pointed manner.

<sup>1</sup> These observations are a paraphrase of John vii. 16-19.

These pretended defenders of the law have not truly understood the law. Did not Moses authorise circumcision on the Sabbath day, thus placing a patriarchal institution above a formal command in the Decalogue? There are, then, laws paramount to legal observances; now all that contributes to the good of man forms part of this eternal code. Who will dare to dispute that it is more important to make a man altogether whole than to circumcise him? This bold and searching language astonishes the listeners all the more, because they know what issues are pending: will the rulers indeed believe that this is the very Christ, and cease seeking to kill Him? But conviction is only transitory; the objection of His low and obscure origin at once recurs. They know too well whence He comes: "Ye both know me, and ye know whence I come," replies Jesus, with solemn irony; and to these men who look only at earthly things, and are offended by the workshop of Nazareth, He shows the heaven whence He descends. Some are moved by so much majesty, but the majority remain hostile. The Pharisees are doubtless assembled in the council-chamber, for it must at once be decided whether this Galilean Teacher is to be suffered to supplant them in the very midst of the feast; they hasten to take advantage of the variable mood of the crowd; their emissaries are prepared to seize Jesus at the first favourable moment. He, meanwhile, preserving

<sup>1</sup> John vii. 22, 23.

His royal serenity, declares to the people that the light which had been granted for a time was soon to be withdrawn, and that the day would come when they would bitterly repent having rejected their Deliverer.<sup>1</sup> His warnings are no better understood than His promises.

Every morning, during the feast, the priest came down from the holy mountain, with a golden vessel in his hand, to draw water from the famous fountain of Siloam, at the foot of Moriah ; he returned in the midst of a great concourse of people, to the sound of psalms and trumpets, and concluded the ceremony by pouring the water from his golden vessel over the altar. This rite was designed to commemorate the miraculous stream which flowed from the rock beneath the rod of Moses. But in Israel every memory was a hope and symbol of that which was to come. The work of Messiah was described in the prophets under the figure of floods of living water, fertilising the thirsty ground. "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation," had said the prophet Isaiah.<sup>2</sup> The prophet Joel had foretold that a fountain should "come forth out of the house of the Lord."<sup>3</sup> Ezekiel had used similar images.<sup>4</sup> Jesus was, then, certain of being understood by the people when He said: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John vii. 33, 34.<sup>2</sup> Isaiah xii. 3.<sup>3</sup> Joel iii. 18.<sup>4</sup> Ezek. xxxvi. 25.<sup>5</sup> John vii. 37, 38.

He likened Himself to the rock in the desert which had given life to Israel. But the spiritual reality far surpasses the type; Jesus not only quenches thirst, He opens in the soul a "well of water springing up into everlasting life,"—a magnificent image of the expansive force of the divine life, freely given that it may be freely diffused.

The more clearly Jesus reveals Himself as Messiah in the exalted sense in which He uses the word, the more His hearers are divided about Him. Everything points to a decisive crisis at hand; the people are by turns attracted and repelled. One part is almost ready to believe in Him, or at least to take Him for the prophet who was to go before Messiah; but the favourable impression passes away at the ready suggestion, by an adversary, of His origin in the despised province of Galilee. This is the favourite argument of the Sanhedrim. The council was still sitting, and awaiting with impatience the return of those whom they had sent to take this importunate agitator of the passions of the crowd. What was their indignation when the officers returned alone, saying, in self-defence: "Never man spake like this man." Thus, on the first encounter with Jesus, material force flinched, as if by an instinct of its future defeat. This haughty religious aristocracy gives the measure of its insolent pride in the significant words: "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?" In vain Nicodemus lifts a timid voice to

<sup>1</sup> John vii. 40-42.



invoke that first law of universal justice, which does not condemn the accused without a hearing; his mouth is shut by the contemptuous rejoinder: "Art thou also of Galilee? Search and see, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet."<sup>1</sup> Thus does passion stifle all remonstrance. The fate of Jesus is already decided. The last day of the Feast of Tabernacles may, then, be considered as a great epoch in His life.

Shortly afterwards, perhaps the day following, we see some of the members of the Sanhedrim themselves coming on the scene.<sup>2</sup> It is not enough for them to set spies upon Jesus; they will make a direct attack upon Him. They find Him in the court of the women, which adjoined their council-hall, and was called also the Treasury, because in it were placed the coffers of brass destined for receiving alms. It was the custom to light, during the Feast of Tabernacles, two great candelabra, which shed light over the whole city; this ceremony was performed before all the people to the sound of instruments of music. Perhaps it was intended to recall to mind the bright cloud which was the torch of Israel during the nights of the desert. The candelabra must have been extinguished at the time Jesus entered the court, for the feast was at an end; but He was doubtless alluding to this ceremony when He exclaimed: "I am

<sup>1</sup> In their anger the members of the Sanhedrin spoke with a disregard of fact, when they said no prophet came out of Galilee, for this was the country of Jonah.

<sup>2</sup> John viii. 13.

the light of the world."<sup>1</sup> It may be affirmed of these great statements concerning Himself, that they are everything or nothing; if He is not truly that which He says, no words can be more idle, for He gives no demonstration of His assertion; but if He is indeed the light, He needs but to show Himself. The simple manifestation of Himself will then be the most conclusive of arguments. A fool or an impostor may make the same claims, but then he is after all only a madman or a rogue, while Jesus Christ is Jesus Christ. Unquestionably, another than He may say, "I am the light of the world," but He only "gives light to the world."

He meets the objections of the members of the Sanhedrim, who, according to their judicial notions, demand witnesses to verify His assertions, by a transcendent method peculiarly His own. The law of Deuteronomy requires two witnesses in every cause.<sup>2</sup> Jesus sets forth Himself and His Father as the two witnesses demanded.<sup>3</sup> Jesus may be heard as to Himself, because He alone knows whence He comes, and whither He goes;<sup>4</sup> such a mystery eludes every human eye; He is not alone, He is with Him who sent Him,<sup>5</sup> and His judgment of men rests on that of His Father; while His adversaries, instead of elevating their judgment to this divine point of view, judge only by the appearance.<sup>6</sup> In speaking of this witness of His Father, Jesus does not allude merely to His

<sup>1</sup> John viii. 23.<sup>2</sup> Deut. xvii. 6.<sup>3</sup> John viii. 18<sup>4</sup> John viii. 14.<sup>5</sup> John viii. 16.<sup>6</sup> John viii. 14-18.

miracles, but also to that inner voice, that sense of the divine, to which He constantly appeals. He touches the very root of the incredulity of His opponents in that grand utterance: "I am from above, ye are from beneath; ye are of this world, I am not of this world."<sup>1</sup> This radical incongruity of nature is the reason why they cannot comprehend Him, and why they will put Him to death, and themselves die in their sins.<sup>2</sup> His hearers stupidly imagine that He has formed some purpose of suicide; He then explains His true meaning: His death will be His elevation, for it will prove to His enemies, by the very punishment which it will draw down upon them, that He is indeed the Sent of God, and has done nothing of Himself.<sup>3</sup> Pressed by his opponents, He declares, in the same breath, His deepest humiliation and His supreme dignity: "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."

Once again a reversion is produced in His favour, not, indeed, among the Pharisees, but among the surrounding throng; some Jews seem convinced by His words, but He will have no doubtful or wavering adherents. Fugitive impressions are of little worth, and He declares that those only are His disciples who continue in His word.<sup>4</sup> Then saith He, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."<sup>5</sup> This is a direct insult to the haughty pride of the Jews, who glory in being of the seed of Abraham.

<sup>1</sup> John viii. 32.      <sup>2</sup> John viii. 21-24.      <sup>3</sup> John viii. 27, 28.

<sup>4</sup> John viii. 31.      <sup>5</sup> John viii. 32.

The hearers indignantly remind Jesus of this their illustrious descent. He reduces their boast to its true worth, showing that at heart they are bowed beneath the yoke of the most degrading slavery—the slavery, not of Rome (which might by a strong effort be broken), but of sin. He maintains His position against their murmurs by setting forth their unworthy treatment of Himself; they call themselves the children of Abraham, and yet they seek to kill Him, the true Isaac, the holy revealer of truth. He tells them plainly who is their father, even the great enemy of God, the murderer of souls: are they not partakers in his hatred of truth? is not the true cause of their repugnance to Jesus His Divine holiness? “Which of you,” He asks, “convinceth me of sin?”<sup>2</sup> Those who reject in Him the highest manifestation of the Divine cannot be of God; whence then are they but of Satan? The exasperated Pharisees affect to regard Him as one possessed; but He repels their scorn, and asserts His true prerogative; though He seeks not His own glory, yet He is none the less the Prince of Life dispensing eternal benefits. He who believeth in Him shall never die. “Thou art mad,” they say; “for even Abraham himself is dead.” Jesus accepts the imputation, and goes on to affirm His pre-existence in terms yet more unequivocal: “Before Abraham was, I am.” The Jews, who that day took up stones to stone Him, were truer interpreters of His sacred word than the

<sup>1</sup> John viii. 34-42.<sup>2</sup> John viii. 46.<sup>3</sup> John viii. 47.

commentators who despoil it of all its sublime significance; they had truly grasped its meaning, and if they raised the cry of blasphemy it was because this was no vain and empty saying. It is better for the supernatural to be admitted, even with a curse, than to be cast out with show of reverence.

No reconciliation was now possible between Judaism and Jesus. The smallest occasion might bring events to a crisis. Such an occasion arose in a new miracle, wrought on the Sabbath day. Jesus loved to use His holy liberty, and to mark the broad distinction between the traditions of men and the law of God. Near the Temple, He met a man blind from his birth: He healed him, not directly by a word, but bidding him go to the pool of Siloam, and wash his eyes, which He had covered with a little moistened clay. Ancient prophecy had made this famous spring a symbol of divine grace;<sup>2</sup> its softly flowing waters were tenderly contrasted with the rushing torrent—the image of the noisy power of pagan nations. This Hebrew typology, from which Jesus had borrowed so many allusions at the Feast of Tabernacles, was certainly not absent from His thoughts when He sent the blind man to the fountain of Siloam. No sooner had he returned, seeing, to his house, than the rumour of the miracle spread abroad through all the city. The Sanhedrim, who were on the watch for every proceeding of Jesus, were aroused immediately. An inquiry commenced,

<sup>1</sup> John ix. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah viii. 6.

conducted under the influence of the most iniquitous passions. Such a miracle, augmenting the credit of a dangerous adversary, could not be admitted, and investigations were set on foot. The Sanhedrim summon to their bar the blind man who has been healed, hoping to extort from him a denial of the miracle; they obtain only a confirmation of it. Then the parents are cited to be confronted with their son; they are ready to declare that this is their son, who was blind, and can now see; but so much are they under the dominion of fear that they refuse to give any other information. The subject of the miracle is examined again. The judges play the most contemptible part; they endeavour to constrain him to lie against his conscience. To all their solicitations the poor man replies, with unshaken firmness: "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." Let them say what they will, they cannot persuade him that what is, is not. The judges tremble with anger; since the fact cannot be denied, they will blacken it. They think to stop the mouth of this inconvenient witness, by telling him that Jesus is a violator of the law, and a sinner. But they have left out of their reckoning the great voice of conscience, which rises above all their craft and violence. "We know," says the healed man, "that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a servant of God, and do his will, him he heareth." No antagonism is so formidable to sophists, making a traffic of truth and religion, as the holy simplicity

of an upright heart. The blind man foils the false calculations of his questioners; these return to the charge by asking him to tell them once again that which they already know. He darts at them this shaft of cutting irony: "I have told you already, and ye did not hear; wherefore will ye hear it again? Will ye also be his disciples?"

Frustrated in all their schemes, the Sanhedrim close the inquiry with a summary act of authority, which was itself a confession of weakness; for to strike a blow, instead of giving an answer, is, in questions of doctrine, to admit defeat. The sentence of lesser excommunication, which lasted thirty days,<sup>1</sup> was pronounced against this bold heretic who had baffled both arguments and threats. It is clear that Jesus took the blow as aimed at Himself; it was for His sake the poor man was condemned, and this sentence secured him that sublime compensation reserved for the outcasts from every synagogue. He receives the approval of the Master, who reveals Himself to him as the Son of God, and at the feet of Messiah, the banished one esteems his shame to be his glory. Jesus immediately draws a great lesson from the late occurrence. "I am come," He says, "a light into the world, that they who see not might see, and that they who see might be made blind." The humility which seeks light receives it, and the pride which think it sees, remains in darkness.

<sup>1</sup> This is the punishment intended in John ix. 34.

<sup>2</sup> John ix. 29.

Before leaving Jerusalem, Jesus pronounces His excommunication on the unfaithful hierarchy, but it is the excommunication of Divine love, which does not seek its own revenge in the perdition of souls. What infinite pity dwells in this indignation of the Saviour! That which grieves Him most is not the offence He Himself has received; it is the scattered flock, which, instead of faithful shepherds, has worthless hirelings, ready to flee the moment the wolf approaches, or the thief comes to steal and destroy.<sup>1</sup> They have not entered into the sheepfold by that door which the porter openeth; they have not received their commission from God, and have not accepted the grand condition of entrance into His kingdom, which is faith in Him whom He hath sent. In this sense Jesus is the door of the sheepfold. But He is also Himself the Good Shepherd; how great is the contrast between Him and the hireling! First of all, the soul which is His hears His voice, while it has no echo for that of the impostor or the hypocrite; He feeds instead of neglecting His sheep; He defends instead of fleeing from them. Finally, He gives His life for them, the generous and sovereignly free gift of self-sacrificing love, constrained only by its own compassion.<sup>2</sup> It seems as though at the thought of His death, the horizon open to His gaze widens, for scarcely has He spoken of His sacrifice, when He sees the old enclosure of the fold thrown down, and those other sheep of all nations entering

<sup>1</sup> *John x. 9-12.*<sup>2</sup> *John x. 17, 18.*



who are to form part of His flock. "There shall be one fold and one shepherd,"<sup>1</sup> He says, as the future expands before His prophetic gaze.

Such was the farewell which Jesus bade to the city which had rejected Him, before taking for the last time His journey into Galilee. His name was still tossed to and fro between insult and applause, but the approving voices grew fewer and fewer, and were chiefly heard among the lowest ranks of the people. His foes were not despicable Galileans; they were the great, the rich, the powerful. But He was not alone, for God was with Him.

<sup>1</sup> John x. 16

## *LAST SOJOURN IN GALILEE.<sup>1</sup>*

SOLEMN RETURN TO JERUSALEM THROUGH SAMARIA.

FEAST OF THE DEDICATION. FROM OCTOBER TO  
DECEMBER, 782.

### I. Last Sojourn in Galilee.

JESUS will once more revisit Galilee before quitting it for ever; He had left it abruptly, so as to arrive at Jerusalem during the Feast of Tabernacles; He desires to take yet one solemn farewell of the people of His love and care. He finds the country just as He had left it; the multitude, variable as the wind, is ready to flock around Him one day if He works a miracle, and to fall away the next into the most unreasoning prejudice; the higher classes are averse or indifferent. Herod Antipas, who hitherto has looked with contempt on the new religious movement, or been aroused only to curiosity about it, now begins to treat it with declared hostility, perhaps intentionally exaggerated by those who are its organs. Jesus, who knows that He is to be put to death at Jerusalem, is in no way disquieted by the movements of Herod, whose character He epitomises in a word. This cunning and cruel

<sup>1</sup> It is not possible to present the facts connected with this period in strict chronological order. We must be satisfied with grouping them.

fox will have no power to hinder the accomplishment of His mission.<sup>1</sup>

His activities are still divided between His disciples, whose education He carries on with unwearying patience, and the mass of the people, whom He endeavours to enlighten as to His mission. But His appeals now take a more direct form; He mingles severe reproaches with words of mercy; His very love bids Him strike with importunate blows the proud hearts so hard to break. Then the situation is now declared; overt war has begun, neutrality is no longer possible; His hearers must choose their side. In the early days of His ministry, He suffered the crowd to follow His footsteps without addressing to them such urgent personal appeals, because He was desirous first of all to make himself known to them. Now they know enough of Him to choose between Him and His adversaries. Thus He does not hesitate to hold up before His present hearers the severe ideal of the true disciple. He demands an absolute self-surrender, which will not hesitate to break the tenderest and most sacred ties, and to subordinate the most legitimate family affections to the fulfilment of the Divine will. This is what He means by hating father and mother. The best commentary on these declarations is the reply which He makes to the two men who are willing to follow Him, but on their own terms; the one desires to bid farewell to them which are at his house, the other to go and bury

<sup>1</sup> Luke xiii. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xiv. 26.

his father.<sup>1</sup> No; there can be no condition, no delay. When Jesus calls, every other claim must be set aside; there can be no duty paramount to absolute obedience. It is then a perilous undertaking to become His disciple, and one that requires serious consideration. Before starting on this warfare, the conduct of the king must be imitated, who measures his forces against the forces of his enemy; before beginning to build this tower, it is needful to count the cost, and see whether there be enough to finish it.<sup>2</sup> "He that taketh not up his cross and followeth me, cannot be my disciple."<sup>3</sup> Assuredly such words were well calculated to alienate all who were not prepared to enrol under this banner of renunciation. And yet, if there was one lowly and willing heart, one sorrowful soul needing consolation, how could it resist such an appeal as this: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls; for my yoke is easy and my burden is light."<sup>4</sup>

There is no more certain hindrance to coming to Jesus than the love of wealth. What a striking picture is that of the rich man falling asleep satisfied, when he has filled his granaries with his plentiful harvests, and waking suddenly beyond the grave under the eye of that God who has not been in all his thoughts! "What shall a man give in exchange

<sup>1</sup> Luke ix. 57-62.    <sup>2</sup> Luke xiv. 28-30.    <sup>3</sup> Luke xiv. 27.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. xi. 28-30.    <sup>5</sup> Luke xii. 16-21.

for his soul? What advantageth it a man though he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" The parable of the king's feast belongs to the same class. Already the table is spread to receive the guests; the servants of the house bid them hasten to it, but they one after another make excuse. One has bought a piece of land, and must needs go and take possession. Another is proving a yoke of oxen. A third cannot leave his new-made wife. All these excuses reveal an idolatrous love for the things of this world. The master of the house is wrath at these temporisings, which are disguised refusals. He sends out his servants into the highways and hedges, and brings in the poor, the halt, and the blind. Thus have the natural guests of God shut themselves out of His covenant. The rejection of the Jews as a people, and the calling of the Gentiles, appear in the background of this parable. The gate of heaven is narrow; there must be an earnest striving to enter in.<sup>1</sup> Let there be no reliance on forms and ceremonies; in vain shall be the cry, "Lord, Lord!" "I know you not who you are," will the King of heaven answer to the descendants of patriarchs and prophets. The door shall be shut upon them, while it shall open to the multitudes coming from the east and the west. The first shall be last, and the last first.<sup>2</sup> Jesus constantly points to this conclusion, because the sole possibility of salvation that remains to this generation, is to cease from

<sup>1</sup> Luke xiv. 16-21.

Luke xiii. 24-30.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xiii. 30.

its obstinate rejection, and to profit by this dying beam of Messiah's day, before it is hidden from its eyes in night.

The same merciful severity is observable in the words which He uttered on learning that some Galileans had been put to death by Pilate at Jerusalem, in the disturbances which had arisen there on the occasion of the construction of a great aqueduct. "Think you," said He, "that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans because they suffered such things? I tell you nay, but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." These solemn words are like the last appeal to that favoured Galilee which had eaten and drunk in Messiah's presence,<sup>2</sup> and had heard His most touching teachings. If the mood of the *people* is unyielding, we may judge what is that of the Pharisees. The old leaven of pride and hypocrisy is ever working in their hearts. The endless disputation on the manner of observing the Sabbath is renewed on every fresh occasion. Jesus is ever infringing the absurd decree implicitly issued against Him by the men of human tradition: "It is not lawful to heal and to save on the Sabbath day." He continues to use His royal liberty in this respect, as shown by the healing of the poor woman bowed down by "a spirit of infirmity."<sup>3</sup> He chastises the pride of the Pharisee by drawing his likeness in ineffaceable colours; He shows him, standing before God in the Temple, himself the object of his own

<sup>1</sup> Luke xiji. 3.    <sup>2</sup> Luke xiii. 26.    <sup>3</sup> Luke xiii. 10-14.

adoration at the foot of the altar, lifting to heaven a prayer which in its pride is a challenge, and blessing the most High and Holy One that he is not like other men. Contrasted with him is the weeping publican, who, not daring to lift so much as his eyes to heaven, smites on his breast, and says: "God be merciful to me a sinner." This is the man who goes down to his house justified.<sup>1</sup> The parallel was a mortal outrage to the haughty enemies of Christ.

Thus from the highest ranks to the lowest, Jesus is met by opposition and unbelief. The kingdom of God has come without observation, and in spite of the miracles and teachings of Messiah, it has failed to arrest attention. Men can mark in the blowing of the south wind the sign of a sunny day, but they cannot read the heavenly signs which announce that the new times are come.<sup>2</sup> On the eve of leaving for ever this land, through which He has gone from place to place doing good, He pronounces its merited sentence: "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which have been done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sack-cloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell, for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained

<sup>1</sup> Luke xviii. 14.<sup>2</sup> Luke xvii. 20, 21.<sup>3</sup> Luke xii. 54-56.

until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee.”<sup>1</sup>

Thus the ministry in Galilee, which opened with beatitudes, closed with a sound of woe. The names of Sodom and Gomorrah fell like a gloomy prophecy upon those charming cities which then animated the borders of the lake, and of which the very ruins have now disappeared. This terrible sentence of Christ woke the echoes, not of the desolate rocks which surround Jerusalem, but of those fresh and verdant hills on which the listening people once sat at His feet. It was the summing up of His Galilean ministry,—the conclusion of so many unavailing miracles, and rejected appeals. Thus the moral unity of the life of Jesus is maintained. Hearts have been revealed; He has never belied Himself. That which has changed is the disposition of the people, but He, whether men would hear or whether they would forbear, has never ceased to show to the world the love of God. At this very period, He urges with increasing emphasis the duty of the second great commandment. There is no approach to the fanaticism which leads to intolerance, closes the heart to tenderness, and in the name of the cause of God refuses mercy.

Jesus seizes the opportunity of a feast in the house of a leading Pharisee to recommend, not only the humility which chooses the lowest place, but also the

<sup>1</sup> Luke x. 12-16



generous hospitality which bids to its board, not rich friends, but the poor and needy. Clearly, what is thus given is only a special application of the rule which should govern the whole life, and ever substitute the free gift for the simple exchange of benefit or service.<sup>1</sup> The parable of the Good Samaritan belongs to the same date.<sup>2</sup> This draws, in all its breadth, the contrast between barren and selfish religiousness, and that Christian charity which for eighteen centuries has been bearing the burdens of humanity. The former passes proudly by the dying traveller in order to repair to the holy city, and offer to God in His temple, a hypocritical worship; the latter sees God in His creature, and recognises no more binding act of piety than to pour oil and wine into the sufferer's wounds, and to carry him to the hospitable inn. This was the sublime reply of Jesus to the scribe who asked Him; "Who is my neighbour?" "Thy neighbour is every suffering fellow man," is the general burden of the parable. But the Saviour goes yet further; He makes Himself one with the poor man; the sufferer is Himself. It is He who is visited in the prisoner's cell—He who is fed with the bread given to the hungry. The glass of water held to the thirsty lips He owns with gratitude, as if Himself had drunk. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." But no less does He take to Himself the reproach

<sup>1</sup> Luke xiv. 7-14.<sup>2</sup> Luke x. 25-37.

and wrong endured by the least of His followers ; no vain repetition of holy words will avail to avert the sentence of unloving hearts.<sup>1</sup> The parable of Lazarus and the rich man supplements that of the Good Samaritan, by declaring the chastisement which will await those rich men clothed in purple and fine linen, who suffer the needy to perish with hunger at the door of their splendid dwellings. The veil which hides the future life is withdrawn for a moment, and we witness the terrible reversion which awaits the great of this world, who have trampled under foot the humble and the weak ; in the very hour when earth is honouring them with a costly funeral, they learn how far the judgment of God differs from that of their flatterers, while angels carry Lazarus into the abode of glory.<sup>2</sup>

It is unjust to represent these parables and discourses as the excited expression of a sort of communism, as if Jesus had sought to found a religion for the poor. He laid no ban on riches in themselves, as is proved by the parable of the unfaithful steward, which concludes with a charge to make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, thus implying that wealth may be made subservient [to a noble end].<sup>3</sup>

The instructions given to the disciples during this period are in perfect harmony with the gravity of the circumstances ; they are addressed, not to the

<sup>1</sup> Matthew xxv. 41-46.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xvi. 19-31.

<sup>3</sup> Luke xvi. 9-12.

apostles alone, but to all who had attached themselves to their little group. Jesus chose seventy from among them, whom He sent forth, as He had sent the twelve, to accomplish a mission, very elementary if only the simplicity of the message is regarded, but very glorious in the supernatural effects which accompany it. The seventy disciples, like those who have gone before them, are to learn in the school of experience, what is the demand Jesus makes on His witnesses, and what the extraordinary aid He grants to them.<sup>1</sup>

The striking resemblance which exists between the two great commissions of the Gospel witnesses, deprives the first of any sacerdotal character. The apostolic office, in its moral obligation, extends to all the true followers of Christ, since the Master gave the same commission indiscriminately to His messengers, whether they were of the number of the twelve or not. The number seventy, as is well known, represented, in Jewish symbolism, the Gentile nations, as the number twelve was associated with the tribes of Israel. The second charge implies, then, an extension of the evangelical mission; we have no repetition of the restrictions by which the first was limited to the Jewish people. St. Paul, who represented in so many respects this second apostolate, wider than that of the twelve, would subsequently find an argument in favour of the world-wide scope of Christianity in this choice of the seventy disciples,

<sup>1</sup> Luke x. 1-11.

as we may gather from the careful record of the event by his friend and companion, Luke.

The seventy disciples appear to have made a rapid journey; they returned much elated at the great power with which they had found themselves entrusted; even the devils were subject to them.<sup>1</sup> They needed to be cautioned against pride, for the human soul easily lets itself become intoxicated, even with the gifts of God, and is ever ready to confound the feeble instrument of the miracle with the sovereign hand which works by it. Hence the warning words of Jesus addressed to them: "Rejoice not that the devils are subject unto you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."<sup>2</sup> It is not the prodigy wrought, but the pardon received, which should fill the heart with joy unutterable.

Every saying of the Master is a watch-word for the great battle. His exhortations may be thus summed up: "Gird up your loins," as travellers gather up their flowing garments. Lay aside every earthly care, in reliance upon Him who clothes the lilies of the field, and feeds the fowls of the air. The exceptional character of the first apostolic mission implies an absolute surrender of earthly goods—"Sell that ye have, and give alms." Let your heart and your treasure be on high.<sup>3</sup> Have your lamps lighted, for the solemn vigil is about to begin; you must be on the watch, like servants whose master is absent, but may return at any

<sup>1</sup> Luke x. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Luke x. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Luke xii. 33, 34.

moment.<sup>1</sup> Woe to that servant who, knowing his master's will, shall not be ready to receive him. This return of the Messiah, which will be the climax of history, is depicted in a few rapid and terrible strokes, piercing like lightning-flashes the vast obscure. Jesus gives a kind of solemn summary of the Divine judgments which will precede the final judgment.<sup>2</sup> The same thoughts will soon be further developed in the great prophetic discourse spoken at Jerusalem.

This holy vigil, this solemn hour of expectation, must be spent in prayer; for whence shall come the strength for such perilous duties? Imitate, then, the widow, whose importunity compels the unjust judge to see her righted. If persevering urgency triumphs over unrighteousness itself, what will it not obtain from the God of mercies, when it knocks at those heavenly gates which are ever ready to open?<sup>3</sup> If the father, who is in bed with his children, rises to give bread to his importunate friend, what will not He give who is ever watching over His people, and never slumbereth nor sleepeth?<sup>4</sup> The disciples, conscious of their insufficiency for the great task entrusted to them, exclaim: "Lord, increase our faith." "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed," Jesus replies, "ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence, and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible unto you."<sup>5</sup> Faith

<sup>1</sup> Luke xii. 35, 36. <sup>2</sup> Luke xii. xvi. 22-37. <sup>3</sup> Luke xviii. 1-8.

<sup>4</sup> Luke xi. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Matt. xvii. 20.

is, in truth, power ; and he who believes absolutely, shares in the Divine omnipotence.

But, even in the most momentous crisis of events, the ruling spirit of the believing heart is to be charity—the charity which can forgive a brother, not seven times, but seventy times seven, that is, without limit or end.<sup>1</sup> Jesus joins example to precept. As He passes through Samaria, James and John, in the impetuosity of their hearts, ask the Master that fire may be called down from heaven to destroy a village of the Samaritans which has refused to receive Him. Jesus rebukes them sternly.<sup>2</sup> Thus, whether He is addressing the people, or instructing His disciples, charity occupies the first place in His teaching.

The evangelists have preserved many sayings of Jesus which belong to this phase of His life, and which give us an insight into His heart. On the return of the seventy disciples, He exclaims: "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven."<sup>3</sup> What doubt, then, can there be of His triumph, since His power is transmitted to His ambassadors? They have cast out devils in His name, they are thus invested with His might; He may die and return to heaven; in them He lives again, and the kingdom of evil is already vanquished. Jesus rejoices with a sublime joy in seeing these ignorant men, whom He has made His disciples, thus beginning to discern the truth which He had brought to the world, while it still eluded the great and the wise. "I thank

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xviii. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Luke ix. 51-56.

<sup>3</sup> Luke x. 18.

thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me by my Father, and no man knoweth who the Son is but the Father, neither knoweth any man who the Father is but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.”<sup>1</sup> This emotion of happiness is so strong, that He will fain make His disciples sharers in it. “Blessed are the eyes that see the things that ye see; for I say unto you, many prophets and kings have desired to see these things that ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear these things that ye hear, and have not heard them.”<sup>2</sup> Never has Jesus a more full and joyful faith in His work than at this moment, when He knows that no further immediate success is awaiting Him. His soul soars calmly above all present difficulties. This confidence, unshaken in the midst of so many discouragements, reveals a much higher greatness than enthusiasm in a cause which is at once crowned with success. It is not coloured by any illusive expectations; so far from shrinking from that which is before Him, Jesus anticipates it with holy eagerness. “I am come to send fire upon the earth, and what will I if it be already kindled? I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished.”<sup>3</sup> This coming baptism is not to be like

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xi. 25-27.<sup>2</sup> Luke x. 23, 24.<sup>3</sup> Luke xii. 49, 50.

that which He received in the waves of Jordan, beneath the heavens opened to bless Him. This mysterious baptism is a bleeding sacrifice ; and now that the appointed hour is at hand, He desires it with an earnest desire, for it is the consummation of His work, and the condition of victory.

Thus, in these plains of Samaria, which border on Judæa, as before on the summit of the Mount of Transfiguration, His heart is divided between the prospect of glory and that of sacrifice. Those quick thrills of joy, those eager impulses to reach the cross, all the changing emotions which betray themselves, show how far was the real Christ from an imaginary, impassive, abstract being. His was indeed a living soul, sensitive and responsive, but ever rising above circumstances ; deriving from them neither its majestic calm nor its ardent love, but simply revealing through them all that inherent grace, which could neither be given nor taken away.

It is evident, from the Gospels, that this last journey through Galilee was accomplished with a certain solemnity, and in the midst of a great concourse of people. The Master seems to have gone over once more the whole field of His early labours.

II. Return to Jerusalem by Samaria. Feast of the Dedication.

In Samaria, in spite of the daring hostility to



which we have alluded, Jesus gained one new disciple. Of the lepers whom He healed on the confines of Judæa, one was a Samaritan; and he alone evinced a true gratitude by coming to join himself to the followers of Christ, as soon as he had fulfilled the rites appointed by the law.<sup>1</sup> Winter had begun; it was the middle of December, the time for celebrating the Feast of the Dedication, in memory of the purification of the Temple by Judas Maccabæus.<sup>2</sup> These heroic recollections excited the patriotism of the Jews beyond bounds. It was a perilous step for Jesus to reappear in the holy city at such a moment. He repaired to the Porch, which was called Solomon's, because tradition assigned to it a date as old as the first Temple. His presence at once caused a strong agitation. He recognised among those who gathered around Him many of His opponents at the Feast of Tabernacles—so at least it may be inferred from the allusion He makes to the previous discourse.<sup>3</sup> After so many divine manifestations, the Jews yet dare to ask Him if He is truly Messiah: to such hardened hearts He will deign no further assurance. He confines Himself to one emphatic affirmation, appealing to His miracles. If they will not admit these, they set themselves against evidence, and are not of the number of the sheep who hear the voice of the Good

<sup>1</sup> Luke xvii. 11-19.

<sup>2</sup> The feast took place about the 20th of December. (Josephus *Ant.* XII. 7, 6.)

<sup>3</sup> John x. 24-40.

Shepherd. He will bring forward no other argument ; everything comes back to this ; this is the root of the matter.

He contrasts with these obstinate unbelievers, who will lend no ear to the voice within, the teachable spirits which have entered into His fold and to whom He gives eternal life. "My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one."<sup>1</sup> At this assertion of His Godhead they take up stones to stone Him. "For what good work do ye stone me?" Jesus asks. "For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy," reply the Jews. It is erroneous to regard the words which follow as a modification of His former avowal. Jesus contents Himself with bringing forward the testimony of Holy Scripture itself, which, in its boldness of speech, even calls gods those who executed justice among the chosen people ;<sup>2</sup> He does not liken Himself to these imperfect representatives of deity ; for He—the Sent of the Father—has declared Himself to be infinitely higher than they. He retracts nothing from what He has said ; He merely presents an argument *à fortiori*.

The conclusion of the discourse is altogether in harmony with its commencement. "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not : but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works, that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me

<sup>1</sup> John x. 30.    <sup>2</sup> The quotation is taken from Psalm lxxxii. 6.

and I in him.”<sup>1</sup> The unbelief of the Jews, carried to its height, availed only to call forth the highest manifestations of the divinity of Messiah. But the time for words was over; already the synagogue showed itself prepared to have recourse to force, and Jesus must needs hide Himself in haste from the fury of His enemies.<sup>2</sup> Murder is the last argument of the power of evil; but this will only serve to prepare new triumphs for the power of good. Love is stronger than death and hate.

<sup>1</sup> John x. 38.

<sup>2</sup> John x. 39.

## SOJOURN IN PERÆA.

THE FAMILY OF BETHANY. RESURRECTION OF  
LAZARUS.

### I. Sojourn in Peræa.

PERÆA comprehended the country stretching along the eastern shore of the Jordan, from the foot of Hauran to the borders of the desert, on the south of the Dead Sea. The waters of the river spread over it a marvellous fertility; the summits of Gilead and Moab stood out against the eternal azure; the climate was celebrated for its salubrity. Peræa, inhabited by a mixed population, was sufficiently distant from Jerusalem to be a stranger to the religious passions raging around the Temple; it offered to Jesus the quiet retreat which He could no longer find in Galilee. Such as He had appeared to the dwellers at Capernaum and in the plain of Gennesaret, at the commencement of His ministry, such He now showed Himself to the people of this country—as merciful, as helpful, as attractive, healing the sick, binding up the broken-hearted. But even in these quiet spots the spirit of disputation came to trouble Him. There was a division among the Rabbis upon the question of divorce. The text of Deuteronomy ran that a man might be parted

from his wife, if "she found no favour in his eyes, or if he found some uncleanness in her."<sup>1</sup> The school of Shamai took these words in the strict sense, and permitted divorce only in case of adultery. Hillel, on the contrary, gave them a dangerous latitude of interpretation, and admitted all kinds of motives for breaking the conjugal tie. This question was submitted to Jesus. In His reply He goes back to the original idea of marriage, as it appears in the story of creation, thus elevating the primeval law above the law of Moses, which, on this point, had made a concession to the hardness of the human heart. According to this law of creation, marriage implies an indestructible union, for physically and morally it makes the man and woman perfect in one. This idea of oneness is lost so soon as the marriage bond is made precarious. Divorce is then forbidden, except in case of adultery, when the union is already morally destroyed; but the guiltless husband is alone permitted to contract a new marriage.<sup>2</sup> The rule laid down by Jesus is the best safeguard for the human family, for it is equally removed from a culpable latitudinarianism which puts marriage at the mercy of caprice, and from the extreme rigour which would maintain it even when it has been profaned and morally violated—a sure method of introducing corruption of manners.

Further than this, He declares marriage itself to be subordinate, like the whole of human life, to the

<sup>1</sup> Deut. xxiv. 1-4.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xix. 3-9.

accomplishment of a higher will. Celibacy is no dishonour, as it was esteemed by Jewish prejudice; it may be a heavenly vocation.<sup>1</sup>

The duty of absolute renunciation comes out with terrible clearness in the words addressed by the Master to the young man, rich in great possessions on these fruitful plains of the Jordan, who came to Him. He had every virtue; he was a faithful observer of the law; perhaps a ruler of the synagogue. Sincerely pious, he was attracted to Jesus by a strong impulse of sympathy.<sup>2</sup> To this exemplary Jew, Jesus recalls the well-known conditions of the righteousness of the law, which are summed up in the observance of the Ten Commandments. "All these have I kept," the young man replies. But the keeping of the law consists not only in observing such and such appointments, but in a readiness to fulfil the whole will of God, whatever that will may be; it is the principle of obedience made the ruling principle of the whole life. To this the young nobleman has not attained, for when Jesus, who has read his heart and discerned its master-passion, says to him: "Sell thy goods and distribute to the poor," he goes away very sorrowful; he has not truly given himself to God, he still prefers his riches. His conduct calls forth the hard saying: "It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."<sup>3</sup>

There is no foundation for supposing that Jesus,

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xix. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xviii. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Luke xviii. 25.

under the influence of growing excitement, sought at this time to make impossible claims on His disciples, requiring of them celibacy and voluntary poverty. He made no such demand; the injunction he laid upon the young man was in principle that which He lays upon all who are called by His name; what He required of him is what He requires of each one of us, namely, the sacrifice of self and the surrender of the favourite idol. This is the universal law of the kingdom; it may vary in its applications, according to individual cases; here it may be fulfilled in celibacy, there in the bosom of the family, under the burden of domestic cares and sorrows; now it may, as in the case of Zacchæus, leave the rich man his riches, while it makes him poor in spirit; again, it may require the wealth itself to be made a sacrifice, as in the present instance. Special vocations differ, but the essential vocation is one, under all diversities; the holiness which implies entire consecration to God is the universal law; there are no Gospel precepts for creating a sort of spiritual aristocracy in the Church, while tolerating a level of mediocrity. Jesus founded no society of latter-day saints; what He founded was a Church, not devoted to wild chimeras, but realising in every-day life the sublime folly of holiness unto the Lord. There are circumstances in which the abnegation of self is only possible in connection with the complete denuding of the outer life, but in this form the sacrifice is of no higher order than the lowly renunciation, which finds its unobtrusive ex-

pression in the "daily round, the common task;" that which is of price in the sight of God, is the spirit of surrender pervading the whole life.

The idea of the true disciple rises ever higher and higher before the eyes of the apostles. "Who then can be saved?" they exclaim. "With man it is impossible," replies the Master, "but not with God, for with God all things are possible." Hardly yet reassured, they ask, by the mouth of Peter, what they shall receive in exchange for the sacrifice they have made for Jesus. The compensation, He declares, will infinitely surpass the sacrifice; they shall receive ten-fold for every good thing they have forsaken for His name—houses, fields, brothers, sisters, wife, father, mother. They will understand in time what is the nature of this compensation; they will learn that the best recompense of love is more love, for it enriches itself by all that it surrenders, and its sufferings become its highest joys. As the last term of this tenfold felicity,<sup>1</sup> persecution is promised to the apostles. We are reminded of the words of the beatitude: "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake." The twelve thrones promised to the apostles must be crosses first;<sup>2</sup> but all reproaches endured for Christ will be turned into glory, and the unbelieving nation which has rejected Him and those who are His, will read its condemnation in the triumph of His long-persecuted Church.

<sup>1</sup> Mark x. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xix. 28.



This promise of the twelve thrones, wrongly understood by the mother of James and John, leads her to prefer a most unseemly request. She asks the highest place for her two sons. "Ye know not what ye ask," says the Master. "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of?" "We can," reply the sons of Salome. "Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of, and with the baptism that I am baptised withal, shall ye be baptised."<sup>1</sup> In other words, he that will reign with Christ, must also first suffer with Him. The kingdom of God is not governed like the kingdoms of the earth, by kings and great men. "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister, and whosoever will be chief among you let him be your servant; for even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many."<sup>2</sup> Assuredly there was no equivocal sound in such words as these.

These grave discourses were interrupted by a scene full of pathos. The hearts of mothers were yearning for an assurance that this matchless kindness embraced their little ones. Some women of Peræa, moved by an irresistible impulse, brought their young children to the new prophet. They felt instinctively that between Jesus and these tender and pure lives, there would be a natural affinity. "The disciples rebuked those that brought them;" but the Master uttered the gentle words which have ever since thrilled the hearts of mothers: "Suffer the little

<sup>1</sup> Mark x. 35-40.

<sup>2</sup> Mark x. 41-43.

children to come unto me." He took them up in His arms; and blessed them, and made childhood the faithful type of the humility to which alone the gate of heaven opens.<sup>1</sup> What a picture is here! The highest effort of art cannot render all its pathetic beauty, or do justice to this true idyl of heavenly love.

## II. The Resurrection of Lazarus.

Jesus was recalled to the neighbourhood of Jerusalem by sorrowful tidings brought to Him of a beloved family whose hospitality He had often shared. The village of Bethany is situated at a little distance from the Holy City, to the east of the Mount of Olives. Its white houses are still to be seen in the midst of the olive and carob trees which form its leafy shade; it is surrounded by hills which shut it out from the world; it is an abode of peace and quiet, and as such, all the more attractive from the nearness of the noisy city. Here the eye no more sweeps the wide luminous horizon which spread before it from the neighbouring height, whence its glance could rest now on the solemn precincts of the Temple, now on the scorched plains of the Dead Sea. There is nothing to recall either the glories or the terrors of the theocracy. Bethany is a retired spot, fit to become the sanctuary of a divine mysticism. But it was not only as a calm seclusion for prayer that Jesus sought it, as He did the desert hills of Galilee; He had found at Bethany hearts that could respond

<sup>1</sup> Luke xviii. 15-17.

to His own. There dwelt one of those Israelites indeed who became His disciples as soon as they heard His words. Lazarus lived with his two sisters, Martha and Mary, both equally attached to Jesus according to their peculiar dispositions: Martha's was a prompt and energetic nature, finding its natural expression in active service; Mary's, a deep and contemplative spirit. It would seem that Mary had anticipated even John himself in that close relation which fitly unites the true disciple to Jesus, for she received from the Master a word of unreserved commendation on that day when she sat adoringly at His feet and heard His word. For her the first of all duties is to feed on His teachings; this unreserved affection, in which reverence is blended with ardour, this giving up of her whole being to Him who is at once her brother and her God,—this is the good part which shall never be taken away from her; in this lies her superiority to her busy and distracted sister, whose loyal heart nevertheless owns the influence of the Divine guest. Luke in a few words makes us comprehend what comfort the Master must have found in this house which He so often honoured with His presence.<sup>1</sup> After the barren disputations of Jerusalem, He went to rest under the fig-trees of Bethany, well knowing that there He was loved not for His miracles or His gifts, but for Himself. If

<sup>1</sup> Luke x. 38-42. The narrative of Luke shows that the relations with the family of Bethany had been formed before the fact he relates.

he may be called blessed who gives a cup of cold water to a disciple, what must have been the blessedness of those who welcomed Jesus to their hearth and ministered to Him, in the midst of irritation and outrage, the consolation of their reverent sympathy?

Sickness had entered this home where the bonds of affection were so strong and tender. Lazarus was laid upon a bed of suffering; his sickness increased, and Jesus was in Peræa; it must be a journey of many hours before He could reach Bethany. A messenger was despatched in haste by the two sisters. Instead of turning His steps to their relief, Jesus merely makes answer in the prophetic words, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby."<sup>1</sup> After two days He declares His purpose of returning into Judæa. But Judæa is the place of greatest peril to Him; it may be death to go. To these objections, urged by mistaken affection, He replies, that in fulfilling his vocation a man walks ever in the light, beneath the sunshine of God; while he who seeks to escape it, walks in the night and must needs stumble. The only true peril is in disobeying a holy call. "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world; but if any man walk in the night he stumbleth, because there is no light in him."<sup>2</sup> "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; I go that I may awake him out of sleep."<sup>3</sup> By this tender

<sup>1</sup> John xi. 4, 5.

<sup>2</sup> John xi. 9, 10.

<sup>3</sup> John x. 11.

and sublime image He represents that which the Scripture calls the king of terrors. When the disciples understand of what sleep He speaks, they hesitate no longer, and Thomas exclaims, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

The scenes which follow are described by the evangelist with so faithful and graphic a pencil that they pass with living distinctness before our eyes. Lazarus is dead, and has lain four days already in his rocky sepulchre. The friends of the family have come from Jerusalem, and, according to Jewish custom, are making great lamentations over the deceased, while Martha and Mary sit plunged in a mighty grief, with which mingles a secret pang of wounded affection, which they will not own even to themselves. Why was not Jesus there in those hours of woe? Is His all-powerful succour withheld only from those He loves? Suddenly they hear that He is coming. Martha, with her natural impetuosity, rises and goes at once to meet Him. "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." These are her first words. Then her ardent soul passes in an instant from grief to hope. "But I know that even now whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." Jesus will not grant a miracle to a simple impulse of natural affection; He requires faith in its loftiest exercise, and His first aim is to revive this in the wounded heart. Martha must understand that what she asks is less than is already prepared for the *whole race of man*. The special miracle of a partial

and anticipated resurrection is a small thing in comparison to the general resurrection. "Thy brother shall rise again," says Jesus. "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day," replies Martha. The triumph of Jesus over death does not wait that final hour of manifestation; it is declared already, "I am the resurrection and the life." He resumes, "Whosoever believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." "To die in the fulness of light, in the calm glory of the life which is in Jesus, is no longer that which human language calls by the name of death."<sup>1</sup> Martha declares her faith in Christ with a steadfast assurance which places her testimony by that of Peter, whom in so many features she resembles. "I believe," she says, "that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world."<sup>2</sup> If the scene had ended here, Jesus would even then have ministered sure consolation to the bereaved family of Bethany—such consolation as comes now to Christian homes into which death has entered, and which avails not only to stay the stream of tears, but to fill the darkened chamber with a cloud of glory. Faith grasps the great miracle; the interval is longer between the promise and its ultimate fulfilment, but it is only a question of time. Wherever He has trod who is the Resurrection and the Life, death has been vanquished.

<sup>1</sup> Commentary on the Gospel of St. John: Godet II. p. 33A.

<sup>2</sup> John xi. 27.

Yet the bleeding heart yearns for a present relief. Martha, still in tears, goes to seek for Mary, who, in the characteristic intensity of her grief, had not found strength to follow her. Bidden by her sister, she too goes to meet Jesus, who is still on the outskirts of the village. The friends of the family rise and accompany her, thinking she is going to the grave to weep there. When Jesus saw the melancholy train, and heard the plaintive voice of Mary echoing Martha's words (for the same thought had been uppermost in both their hearts), "He groaned in spirit, and was troubled," and coming to the grave, He wept.<sup>1</sup> Let those look on amazed who speak lightly of death as a thing in the ordinary course of nature. "It is terrible," says Pascal, "that man dies, and knows that he must die." That a free and intelligent being, made for eternal life, dies, and, like the lower animals, mingles dust with dust; this is an unnatural thing. It is a confusion in the order of creation, and none more deeply groaned over it than the Son of Man, who saw in it the fearful traces of sin. With His great pity for fallen humanity mingled a tender and intimate sympathy with the bitter suffering of separation. Standing by the grave of Lazarus, He bears on His heart the burden of all mourners. He knows what it is to see a beloved form brought down to the silence and stillness of the tomb. In this solemn moment all present appear in their true characters. The

<sup>1</sup> John xi. 35.

envious Jews are not disarmed by the tears of Jesus; they reproach Him with having withheld his miraculous power. When the stone is rolled away from the sepulchre, Martha, recognising the tokens of mortal decay, yields to the impression of the moment, and expresses a doubt. Jesus confirms her faith by these words: "Said I not unto thee that if thou wouldst believe thou shouldst see the glory of God?" Lifting His eyes to heaven, He gives thanks to His Father, even before the miracle is performed, so sure is He that what He asks is according to His will. Under such circumstances His prayer is rather a public act of homage paid to God before the people, than a prayer properly so called, since He knows that this resurrection is willed of God. "I thank thee, O Father, that thou hast heard me, and I know that thou hearest me always, but because of them that stand by I said it, that they may know that thou hast sent me." Then stooping over the sepulchre He speaks to the dead in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" and he that was dead rises, a living man, still wrapped in the shroud, which is quickly laid aside. Such is this simple and pathetic drama, for which men have dared to substitute a low comedy.

The resurrection of Lazarus produced an immense sensation, and none were more deeply stirred by it than the Sanhedrim. The chiefs of the hierarchy comprehended that such a miracle, wrought at the gates of Jerusalem, would necessarily occasion an



irresistible movement in favour of Jesus, if this were not at once checked by peremptory measures; one step alone seemed adequate to the crisis—the condemnation of Jesus. The Feast of the Passover was approaching; who could tell to what lengths the enthusiasm of a populace, ever eager for the marvellous, might go, when the rumour spread of such a miracle? The Sanhedrim met in the council-chamber, which formed part of the Temple. The deliberation was, from the first, of that stormy and sinister character which precedes extreme measures in times of danger. The question of justice was at once set aside, or rather it was never brought forward; the discussion turned only on the public safety—a method which is sure to lead to violence and wrong. The growing influence of Jesus was set forth as endangering the first interests of the nation. A possible insurrection was spoken of, which would draw down terrible retribution from the Romans. “They will take away both our place and nation,” said the pale lips of these priests and doctors, who guarded the sanctuary of the true God, as the silversmiths of Ephesus defended the Temple of Diana, for the honour and profit it yielded them.<sup>1</sup> This argument, worthy of the Sadducees, ought to have stirred to indignation the patriotic party. But the Pharisees were more jealous of their authority than of the independence of their nation; they dreaded Jesus more than the

<sup>1</sup> John xi. 48.

Romans. Thus they withheld the protest which under other circumstances they would assuredly have made. The Sadducee Caiaphas ruled the decision. Valerius Gratus, before leaving Judæa, had raised him to the high priesthood, which had grown to be nothing more than a precarious magistracy subservient to the policy of Rome. Thus the sacred historian rightly designates him the high priest for that year.<sup>1</sup> Caiaphas was in reality the docile instrument of Annas, his father-in-law and predecessor, an artful politician sold to the foreigner, though holding all the prejudices of his caste. He proposed simply a summary judgment, without further discussion. "It is expedient that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not."<sup>2</sup> Through these iniquitous words the evangelist catches a flash of prophetic light; they seem to him, in the mouth of the high priest, one of those unconscious oracles which the Divine Spirit has more than once wrung from godless lips. Did not Christ, in truth, die for His nation and for mankind? No thought had Caiaphas of such a mystic meaning, and his crime remains in its blackness. No voice invoked the eternal law of justice; the condemnation of Jesus was decided, though not officially proclaimed, for the Sanhedrim could not carry out its own decree, since the Roman governor alone held the power of capital punishment.

<sup>1</sup> John xi. 49.<sup>2</sup> John xi. 50.



## **The Great Week.**



## *DEPARTURE FOR THE FEAST.*

THE JOURNEY. JERICHO. THE SUPPER AT BETHANY.  
TRIUMPHAL ENTRY.

### I. Journey to Jericho.

**I**MMEDIATELY after the resurrection of Lazarus, Jesus retired to Ephraim, a little town lying near Bethel, to the north-west of Jerusalem. There He awaited the caravans travelling from all directions towards the holy city for the celebration of the Pass-over. The time for caution was past; He recognised in the concurrence of events the sure indication of the will of His Father. The fanaticism which courts danger is not obedience, for it proceeds from an untempered zeal which does violence to events; it places the impulse of the heart above the Divine order; it is the assertion of self. True wisdom awaits the clear manifestation of a higher will. The noblest heroism is that of the combatant who stands motionless on the field of battle rather than fail in the charge he has received from his head. Such was the heroism of Jesus, until his hour was come; we shall see the same principle of obedience manifested now in the holy boldness of His acts and words.

His first decisive step was to repair from Ephraim to

Jericho.<sup>1</sup> The distance between the two towns was small. Jericho was then one of the most flourishing cities of Judæa, and stood on the great caravan road, in a plain of luxuriant fruitfulness, irrigated by the Jordan and by the famous water-course miraculously healed by the prophet Elisha. A delicious freshness tempered the intensity of the tropical sky which scorched the neighbouring steppes of the Dead Sea. Thus this district formed a delicious oasis, adorned with the most variegated and brilliant vegetation of this land of the sun. The mountains of Judæa, wrapt in sunset glory, enclosed it to the west, while to the east the Jordan ran low beneath the tall reeds, and flowed on unseen to its last bed in the accursed lake. Jericho, standing as it were in the midst of a garden of palms and fruit trees of every description, was called the City of Perfumes. In place of the miserable hovels which now disfigure the plain, it presented the appearance of a populous and wealthy city, and the pilgrims who came from the north found a welcome halting-place in the midst of such marvellous fruitfulness. The melancholy contrasts of human life were, however, to be met with there as elsewhere; the groans of poverty and sickness were heard in the midst of luxury and wealth. But what matters the outward condition? The man with hands full of gold has no less need of Jesus than the beggar; in the high places of the social scale, no less than at its foot, there are secret wounds of the heart

<sup>1</sup> Luke xviii. 35-43; Mark x. 46-52.

which need a Divine healer. The rich publican was impelled to seek Jesus no less than the blind beggar; He showed Himself as full of grace to the one as to the other, only according to the heavenly mode and measure which reverses the earthly, beginning always with the poor. Compassionate love has its hierarchy, and its preferments are always for the forsaken and the needy.

As Jesus entered into the city, a multitude gathered around Him, and all eyes were fixed upon Him. Everywhere He was greeted either with hatred or acclamation; it was impossible indifferently to pass Him by. No doubt His disciples exulted in this triumphal train, and were in expectation of some great miracle. A blind beggar, named Bartimæus—well known to the inhabitants of Jericho, who had listened for years to his plaintive monotone—sat, as was the wont of such sufferers, by the gate of the city. What he had already heard of Jesus had led him to recognise Him as Messiah; his heart was drawn out to the Deliverer, who, in his melancholy condition, was his only hope. Doubtless he had heard of that blind man whom Jesus had healed at Jerusalem, and of the many others in Galilee to whom He had restored sight. Thus, when it was told him that Jesus passed by, he breathed out all his ardent desire, all his simple faith, in the one importunate cry, "Thou son of David, have mercy on me!" The disciples tried to silence him; this tattered suppliant was an annoyance to them. They



forgot that the voice of suffering was that which awoke the readiest echo in the heart of the Master; no plaint escaped Him; nothing could constitute in His eyes a more important or honourable claim than the cry of the beggar lifted to Him. He stops, and at once places His miraculous power at the behest of the poor man. "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" He asks. "Lord, that I may receive my sight." "Receive thy sight; thy faith hath saved thee!" Wonderful dialogue, repeated from age to age, between the utter weakness which trusts, and the love which saves! Glorious alms of Christ, offered to whomsoever will consent to supplicate for that which he has no power to earn! The healed Bartimæus enters with Jesus into the city, amid the acclamations of the people, who to-day bless God, and in a few more days will curse Him whom God hath sent.

Hardly had He passed the gate of the city, when the procession was arrested again by a scene of a very different kind. Zacchæus was the chief of the publicans of Jericho; this post must have been one of considerable importance in so prosperous a city. But the wealth it procured was more than balanced by the scorn which it drew down from the Jews. Zacchæus was branded by public opinion, in spite of such noble and scrupulous disinterestedness that, as he said to Jesus, he gave half of his goods to the poor, and if he had taken anything from any man by false accusation, he restored him fourfold.<sup>1</sup> He

<sup>1</sup> Luke xix. 8.

was not infatuated with his own virtues; perhaps the unjust ostracism of which he was the victim preserved him from the pride which was fatal to his compatriots. He desired earnestly to see the Divine Master; he knew that Jesus did not repulse publicans, that one indeed was found among His immediate disciples. He dared not, however, in face of an ill-affected crowd, approach Jesus, but he was resolved at least to look on His face, and being little of stature he climbed into a sycamore-tree, planted, as is common in the East, in the middle of the road. Jesus discerned the noble, fretted heart, and at once promised to honour the house of Zacchæus with a visit. He went, according to His own beautiful expression, bringing salvation with him,<sup>1</sup> for that He had found here a true son of Abraham. "The Son of man," He said, in one of those words so inimitably descriptive of His mission, "is come to seek and to save that which is lost."

The prospect of entering Jerusalem amidst the concourse of a great festival, once more aroused false hopes in the minds of the disciples; in spite of all that their Master had told them of the tragical issue of this journey, the welcome He had received at Jericho revived all their cherished illusions. The parable of the pounds, spoken in consequence, was indeed of a nature to dissipate them once and for ever.<sup>2</sup> It was easy to recognise Jesus Himself

<sup>1</sup> Luke xix. 9.

<sup>2</sup> "They (the disciples) thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear." (Luke xix. 11.)

in the man of lofty birth, who, in order to take possession of the kingdom which has been entrusted to him, repairs to the sovereign of a far country, because his subjects have rejected him. Rejected by the Jews, Messiah will be in truth only invested with His royal dignity in the heavens, whence He will afterwards return.<sup>1</sup> Instead of looking for a speedy triumph at Jerusalem, there must be a long period of patient waiting, during which each one is bound faithfully to administer the trust which he has received of God. The talent committed to the ten servants represents that divine life of which every Christian is to make a wise use, and from which he is to draw all possible gain for the glory of his Master and the success of His cause. He will be judged according to the increase of the capital confided to him, and the slothful servant, who has "hid his lord's money in the earth,"—who has supposed, that is, that religion would take care of itself without any effort of the soul—will be brought to certain condemnation, and his talent will be given to the disciple who has made the best use of his holy trust. "To every one that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not even that he hath shall be taken away from him."<sup>2</sup> Nothing is more just than the application of this rule, which is a permanent law of the moral world. The heart grows lifeless in inaction, and becomes incapable, not only of adding to, but even of retaining the best gifts. The parable

<sup>1</sup> Luke xix. 12.<sup>2</sup> Luke xix. 26.

closes with the sentence of condemnation pronounced on the ungrateful nation which has rejected its King. Now the little group may take their journey to Jerusalem, for they are forewarned of that which awaits them there.

## II. The Adoration of Mary of Bethany.

The direct road from Jericho to the holy city passes through Bethany. We may judge what were now the feelings of Lazarus and his sisters for Jesus; there would be ever present to their minds, not only the miracle, but also the tender sympathy and tears of their Divine friend. It would not be possible for Him to pass by the place without pausing at the dwelling of these faithful hearts; beside, the Sabbath was at hand, the last which He was to pass on earth before that one in Joseph's sepulchre; where could it be better kept than at Bethany, in preparation for those days of sorrow and anguish which were to follow it? The next day, which was the first day of the week, Simon, surnamed the Leper, who had probably been healed by Jesus, made Him a feast at his house. Lazarus was seated beside Him, the living monument of His saving power. The women in the East do not sit at the same table with the men. Martha served, evincing in the manner most natural to her, her lively gratitude. In the midst of the feast Mary entered. This quiet woman, who in the ordinary course of life would have shrunk from anything which might attract attention, brought an alabaster

box of very precious ointment. She anointed the head of Jesus, then broke the vase over His feet, and wiped them with her hair; the impulse of her heart was as impetuous, as oblivious of the judgment of men, as that which had drawn the weeping sinner of Nain to the same feet. Gratitude and repentance burn with a kindred flame on the altar of deep and ardent hearts. It is, beside, of the very essence of adoration to ignore conventional limits; it breaks in a manner the common forms of human speech, like another alabaster vase, and finds its fittest expression in the groanings which cannot be uttered. Adoration pours out the soul before God in words and burning tears; it throws us on our knees, overwhelmed with His greatness, blinded with ineffable glory; it calls forth glad sacrifices and unmeasured gifts, and can find nothing precious enough to make an offering to Jesus. Mary, the sister of Lazarus, remains for ever its most beautiful and touching type. It is the glory of adoration that it is madness in the eyes of dry and selfish souls, which count the cost of an impulse of holy love and carry into divine things their utilitarian prudence. "To what purpose is this waste?"<sup>1</sup> say some of the disciples, moved by the spirit of Judas.<sup>2</sup> To no purpose, in truth, but to express that which is inexpressible. This objection, repeated in all ages of the Church, has not withheld the sacred

<sup>1</sup> Matthew xxvi. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* This may be inferred from the narrative of Matthew, who speaks of the disciples, while John speaks only of Judas.

muse from multiplying her hymns, which are neither law nor doctrine ; the slender spire of the cathedral, which serves no purpose of shelter, still springs aloft into the air, and the pencil of holy art ceases not to translate the soul's ideal and to lavish its useless marvels ; in short, the Christian heart will never be restrained from pouring out its treasures before God with no other purpose than its own unburdening. The vase of ointment is perpetually broken over the feet of Jesus, and "this waste" serves to show that direct utility, even in a religious point of view, is not the whole of piety ; that beside the doctrine which points out the right way, the correct faith which walks in it, and the practical activity which sows the good seed, there is in the soul a deep need of love for its own sake, which requires infinite expansion. The plea on behalf of the poor, urged against Mary, is but a sophism. The case is one in which the words especially apply : "This should ye have done, and not have left the other undone." Assuredly He who made Himself one with the poor, and said that whatever was done to them was done to Himself, has sufficiently guaranteed their interests. Piety cannot be limited to the form of almsgiving ; it must needs ascend directly to God in Christ, or it will soon cease to recognise Him under the veil of poverty, and will fulfil nothing more than an act of humane benevolence. The poor have everything to gain from this adoration ; it is when the precious spikenard has been poured forth that the hands open to the most generous

succour. He who is miserly toward God will be miserly also to God's creatures ; calculation is incompatible with love. "The poor ye have always with you," said Jesus, "but me ye have not always. Let her alone; against the day of my burying hath she kept this."<sup>1</sup> In other words, side by side with the daily and permanent calls of charity, which must not be neglected, there are extraordinary occasions on which piety must be manifested in an exceptional manner, and follow freely its own impulse. Has not Jesus just foretold to His own, His approaching death? This vase of sweet perfume is the funeral honour prepared for him in anticipation, by the sister of Lazarus, on the eve of those crowning ignominies. This feature gives to the scene an unapproachable pathos, telling as it does of the debt which every Christian owes to Jesus. For this unmeasurable debt of love it is, that, like the house at Bethany, the whole Church is constantly filled with the odour which rises from the vase of adoration broken at His feet.

We have already pointed out the part which Judas plays on this occasion. He is the mouthpiece of those disciples, who share, at least in some degree, his ungenerous sentiments. It is he who calculates the number of pence wasted ; and if he speaks of the poor, it is but to cloak his avarice. "He kept the purse," says John, "and he was a thief."<sup>2</sup> Does the evangelist intend to speak of some positive larceny,

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxvi. 11, 12.

<sup>2</sup> John xii. 6.

or of the hidden disposition of this ignoble soul, consumed by the love of money? The bitterness which characterises the words of John has been observed. It affords no cause for astonishment; we know that there could be no common ground between the sinner who sold his Lord and the well-beloved disciple. The former was no more capable of comprehending the latter than of admiring the act of Mary. This antipathy was drawn from the Master Himself, for it was He who kindled by contact with His own heart, the pure and ardent devotion of love which appears in the sister of Lazarus, and fills the whole soul of John. The more the spirit which animates Jesus is manifested, the more the illusion vanishes which had attached Judas to Him. The evil has overcome the good in the soul of the disciple; the gloomy prophecies to which he has just listened as to the approaching crisis, the hatred of the rulers, the posture of the Sanhedrim, all show him that his carnal dream of an earthly triumph is at an end. He is ready to repudiate a lost cause, which he can no longer serve without danger, and which, beside, has become odious to him since he has learnt that it demands everything and gives nothing—none, at least, of those material gifts which he covets; but in forsaking it, he will at least gratify in some way his greed of gain. Hence it is, that after the decisive scene at Bethany, his resolution is irrevocably taken. Probably the parleyings between him and the Sanhedrim commence the following day.



## III. Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem.

Hardly was the feast concluded when a large company of Jews arrived at Bethany, who, having come up to Jerusalem for the festival, had heard the marvellous story of the resurrection of Lazarus. These men, unbiassed by the intrigues and passions of the heads of the hierarchy, brought to Jesus the same favourable dispositions which had been so general at the commencement of His ministry, and renewed for one brief moment the period of public favour. Their zeal was so great that the hostile party betrayed serious uneasiness, and even spoke of putting Lazarus to death.<sup>1</sup> Jesus was not unprepared for the triumphal procession of the morrow, for the caravans of pilgrims which He had left behind were close at hand, and one spark would suffice to kindle a flame of enthusiasm in hearts already impressed by what they had seen at Jericho. Through all the periods of His life, Jesus needed only to go with the stream in order to be treated as a king. We know why He had so persistently declined these honours; but on the eve of His suffering, He did not hesitate to accept them; nay more, He even prepared for them by sending two of His disciples to bring Him the ass' colt on which He was to ride.<sup>2</sup> The Orientals, for solemn occasions, prefer this quiet animal to the fiery horse. From early dawn, the crowd coming from Jericho pressed into the little village, eager to see the house signalled by the miracle, the sepulchral cave, whence

<sup>1</sup> John xii. 9, 11.<sup>2</sup> Luke xix. 30.

at one mighty word the dead had come forth, and above all, Lazarus and Jesus Himself. The whole body of His disciples, and among them many who were but disciples of a day, gathered around Him and mingled with the Jews from Jerusalem. Garments were spread as a royal saddle-cloth upon the ass which Jesus was to ride ; boughs were cut down from the neighbouring trees, and long robes stretched upon the ground as a carpet of honour, and with palms in their hands, the enraptured multitude intoned one of the noblest hymns of the sacred psalter, that which was wont to be sung on great festival days: "Hosanna! blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord."<sup>1</sup> For one moment the people were lifted out of themselves, and caught one of those inspirations of enthusiasm which give an intuition of the truth. A breath from heaven passed over the crowd, and swayed it as the wind blows the waving corn; it was but the rapture of an hour, but that hour was sacred.

When some of the Pharisees murmured at the tumult, Jesus answered them: "I tell you that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out."<sup>2</sup> He thus signified His acquiescence in this royal progress, and proved that it was no accident of circumstance, but a part of His fixed plan. The moment was come for Him to give an exalted affirmation of His dignity as Messiah, for the near approach of the great sacrifice set aside the

<sup>1</sup> Luke xix. 38.<sup>2</sup> Luke xix. 40.

possibility of any prolonged misconception ; this King was so soon to be made a victim that no earthly and political hopes could be built upon Him. But it was well for His disciples that this token of glory should so closely precede His humiliations, that they might be assured that He submitted to these only of His own good pleasure. He must leave them a pledge of the triumph which was in store ; otherwise the world would deem that truth was finally devoted to disgrace and failure. So far from this, its destiny is a glorious victory ; it is meet that one prophetic ray should glance upon the brow so soon to be crowned with thorns. The Day of Palms is bright with that glorious promise, which is the consolation of the witnesses of Christ in days of darkness and apparent defeat.

The path which leads from Bethany to Jerusalem is for a time enclosed, as it were, by the wooded hills which surround it. Then it turns abruptly, and joins the eastern slopes of the Mount of Olives at a spot where in our day the searcher seeks in vain for the ruins of Bethphage, "the village of fig-trees." The horizon at once opens before the eye ; beyond the deep Valley of Jehoshaphat, through which flowed the Cedron, Mount Moriah rears its height. At the time of Jesus, the Temple crowned it with its majesty, and the white buildings of the holy city marked out the parallel lines of the hills on which it was built. Jerusalem in its entire proportions stood out against the blue heaven. Such was the scene of which Jesus

suddenly came in view. Forgetting His own momentary glory, He beheld only the mighty misery of the rebellious people; He knew what lay beneath that fair exterior; the queenly city, overflowing at that very hour with streams of pilgrims, that Zion of the prophets, was an accursed city, which had not "known the day of her visitation." "Oh, if thou hadst known," Jesus exclaimed, with accents of unutterable sorrow, "if thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes." He foresaw the terrible destruction which would chastise this obstinate unbelief; He saw the smoking ruins, and the Roman eagle swooping down upon a people scattered and spoiled. Of all these glories there should not remain one stone upon another that should not be thrown down, and Jesus wept over the nation which was about to crucify Him.<sup>1</sup> Such was the vengeance of love rejected and maligned. This agonising pity forms part of the passion of Jesus; glory and suffering are with Him always inseparable, and in this triumphant King of Zion, we behold the Man of Sorrows!

This memorable day closed as it had begun. Jesus wrought His last miracles in the Temple, healing divers sick and lame.<sup>2</sup> Upon this the clear voices of the children in the Temple rang their hosannas through its desecrated arches. It was insufferable to the priests and doctors to be thus

<sup>1</sup> Luke xix. 41-45.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxi. 14.

braved in the very sanctuary which was their domain. Jesus answered their words of indignation by a touching quotation from the Old Testament, which showed what a price He put upon the homage of these artless, upright hearts: "Have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?" After this short appearance in Jerusalem, Jesus returned for the night to Bethany. On the morning of the following day, He repaired again to the Temple, in order to affix His seal to His public teaching. He no longer hoped to persuade the people, but He would, at least, set in full light their impious rejection of Him. Everything in His words and actions tended to this end. As He approached the town, absorbed in these sorrowful thoughts, he saw a fig-tree rich in leafage, but fruitless. How striking the image of that theocracy of solemn form, proudly displaying its ceremonials of worship, while the very heart of the nation was become dry as dead and sapless wood! The malediction with which the barren fig-tree was visited, was one of those parables in action, so frequently found in the old prophets. To speak of injustice towards a tree, is to push the love of equity to a ridiculous extreme, and to forget that unintelligent nature was created for the good of man, and has fulfilled its highest destiny when it has served to express a moral truth; assuredly a great honour is put upon it when, instead of simply nourishing the body, it is made to nourish the soul. For Israel, as

for the fig-tree, the time of fruit-bearing was passed. Only with the free agent the barren season is not inevitable, and the barrenness is a visitation.

The priests and great men of Jerusalem were to show hearts hardened as that of Pharaoh, before signs yet more convincing than those of Moses. They were about to give the most fearful evidence of this obduracy in the perfidy and desperation of their last conflict with Jesus.

## *THE DAY OF CAPTIOUS QUESTIONS.*

“THE intellect,” says a great writer, “is the most perverse of all instruments when it is not under the control of conscience.” We will go further, and say, that when at issue with conscience, it is the feeblest of all weapons. There is a full confirmation of this two-fold assertion in the closing interviews between the Jews of the Temple and Jesus Christ. His opponents display rare subtlety and the most practised dialectics; the intellectual instrument has been polished and sharpened with consummate skill, but it breaks nevertheless in its first contact with the word of Jesus. He never descends to the battle-ground on which they wish to engage Him; He removes scholastic questions into the searching light of humanity and religion; while His adversaries are skirmishing in the empty spaces of sophistry, He constantly grapples with moral realities, and strikes home to the heart. His skill has no analogy with the prudence which evades a difficulty. No; He fights with uncovered breast, openly and without subterfuge, meeting captious questionings now with the silence of offended dignity, now with bold interrogations which confound his would-be judges, now with parables fraught with terrible condemnation to them, till at length the cup overflows

in a burning stream of indignation. Yet, if He finds among the doctors who surround Him, a man not yet perverted by the spirit of caste, and asking questions with at least a measure of sincerity, He replies with benignity. Thus He receives the scribe who asks Him which is the greatest commandment of the law; He points him to the sublime epitome of the decalogue given in Deuteronomy: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself."<sup>1</sup> But when a difficulty is proposed in bad faith, Jesus baffles the artifice, and leaves the hypocrite worsted; He will not suffer Himself to be interrogated by such. In vain the Pharisees press Him to tell them on what He founds His authority. He contents Himself with asking them what they think of the baptism of John, knowing well the perplexity into which He throws these dissemblers, who dare not offend the people by charging their favourite prophet with imposture, and are still less willing to recognise the mission of the Baptist, which guaranteed that of the Galilean. "We cannot tell," say they. "Neither do I tell you," replies Jesus, "by what authority I do these things."<sup>2</sup> But He will not, therefore, abstain from using this contested authority; if He does not deign to vindicate, He will yet assert and manifest it to their confusion.

The parable of the two sons sent into the vineyard,

<sup>1</sup> Mark xii. 28-32; Luke x. 25.    <sup>2</sup> Matt. xxi. 23-27; Luke xx. 1-8.



the one of whom is obedient in words only, while the other, rebellious at first against his father's commandment, yet in the end fulfils his task, contrasts in language as forcible as it is brief, the repentance of the publicans and harlots with the false religiousness of the chiefs of the nation. The voice of John the Baptist found an echo only among the former, and the sinners of yesterday press into the kingdom of God before the zealots of to-day.<sup>1</sup>

The colouring is deeper in another word-painting given on the same day. The wicked husbandmen were not content with neglecting their work, though nothing was wanting to render their labour fruitful—neither tower nor overseer, neither winepress nor hedge; they killed the messengers whom the lord of the vineyard sent to them, and they were ready to sacrifice even his son, the heir of the inheritance. Already the murderous plan was whispered, and the shameless plot laid in secret. What a result was to follow those words spoken but a few days before in the hall of the Sanhedrim, where Caiaphas had demanded the death of Jesus! The parable closes with a declaration of the price Jerusalem would pay for this iniquitous sentence. Those who pronounced it were pronouncing in reality the doom of themselves and their nation, for the enclosure of the vine of Jehovah would be laid low, and the vineyard given to other husbandmen. Another temple would arise on the ruins of the sanctuary of Jerusalem, and

<sup>1</sup> Matthew xxi. 28-32.

its corner-stone would be the doctrine rejected by the Jews.<sup>1</sup>

The same thoughts are conveyed by the parable of the marriage, which has many points of analogy with that in Luke of the feast given by the master of the house. The times of Messiah are clearly pointed out under the figure of the marriage of the king's son. The guests have not only refused the invitation, but they have slain the servants who bore it. Their punishment is depicted in vivid imagery. Their city is to be burned and the murderers put to death.<sup>2</sup> No one may sit at the royal table unless clothed in a wedding garment. The rash guest who has failed so to array himself is cast into outer darkness. The leading idea of this parable is again the merited condemnation of the ancient people of God. The significance of these sayings is comprehended by the hearers, and their rage stops little short of giving immediate realisation to the most tragical portion of the parable, by laying forcible hands on Jesus in the sanctuary.<sup>3</sup>

Recourse to violence in religious controversy is the certain signal of defeat. The Pharisees show by their impotent fury that they are worsted. They have succeeded no better alone, than when leagued with the Herodians. The Sadducees, who had been their allies for a day, now follow them in the field. What amazing reconciliations are wrought by a

<sup>1</sup> See Matt. xxi. 33-46; Mark xii. 1-12; Luke xx. 9-19.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxii. 1-12.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xxi. 4-6.

common hatred! The Pharisees allow their most cherished convictions to be outraged without a protest, when they see any hope that by such means Jesus may be entangled. They, the sworn defenders of the doctrine of the resurrection, open not their mouths, while the Sadducees turn this belief into open ridicule, asking, with scarcely dissembled irony, what would be in a future life the case of a woman who, according to the law of the Levirate, should have married successively seven brothers? Jesus silences this gross objection, so worthy of the materialists by whom it is presented, by declaring the new conditions of the angelic life of heaven; but He goes further; He assails those abject doubts of our immortal destinies which lurk under all such absurd hypotheses, and scatters them with an unanswerable argument: "Have ye not read that which was spoken to you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."<sup>1</sup>

Having quenched this fire of malignant queries, Jesus becomes, in His turn, the questioner. He asks of those present whose son, according to the prophets, Christ should be? "They say unto him, The son of David," for no interpretation of the Old Testament oracles was more unanimously accepted than this. "How then doth David in spirit call him Lord?" replies Jesus, quoting the psalm in which Messiah, represented under the image of a

<sup>1</sup> Matthew xxii. 32.

victorious king, is saluted with this divine title. "If David then call him Lord, how is he then his son?"<sup>1</sup> Clearly Messiah's descent from David is not set aside in these Gospels, which imply it on every page. Jesus sought to show that this nobility, the most illustrious of all in the theocratic point of view, was insufficient for Him, and that He traced a yet higher descent. We see, then, how in this saying, as in the parable of the murderous husbandmen, and in His public discourses, recorded by St. John, He affirms His incomparable dignity, and asserts Himself to be the Son of God with so much the more power and clearness, the more He is loaded with ignominy by the hands of the hierarchy. The question which raises the most violent storms turns rather upon His person than upon His doctrine; it is He Himself who is the cause of offence, not His teaching. And why should we marvel at this? Is He not the Truth, and is not the religion which He founds altogether bound up with Himself?

On this same day the Sanhedrim essayed a true master-stroke, which might succeed in one of two ways, either in rendering Jesus odious to His countrymen, or in placing Him in the light of a rebel against the Romans. The Pharisees, joining with the Herodians, asked Him with hypocritical circumlocution whether it was lawful to pay tribute unto Cæsar or not. No question was more critical; a reply in the affirmative would run counter to every

<sup>1</sup> Matthew xxii. 41-46.

popular prejudice, a negative answer would place Jesus in the rank of rebels liable to death. This two-edged sword was handled with diabolic skill. But, once more, cunning was to be foiled. Jesus surmounts the difficulty by rising to the commanding height of eternal truth. He solves with a word the hard problem of the relation between the civil and religious powers, and while He eludes a perfidious snare, He lays down the infrangible boundary between the domain of conscience and that of the civil authority.

“Why tempt ye me?” He says to His questioners; “show me the tribute money. Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Cæsar’s. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s, and unto God the things which are God’s.”<sup>1</sup>

There is then something in man which belongs not to the State, and which is beyond the grasp of any tyranny; there is a region in which God rules alone, and at the threshold of which the civil power is bound to stay its foot. It is not true that faith, like tribute money, is to be imposed by the sovereign, be he who he may; it is a matter for the individual soul alone. The State has no right of inquisition into our relations with God; it can neither form nor break the sacred bond; so soon as it trespasses on this holy ground, it loses its claim to obedience, and the meanest slave is then bound to resist Cæsar,

<sup>1</sup> Matthew xxii. 21.

that he may render to God that which is God's alone. Thus, at the voice of Christ rises, amidst the overthrow of all despotisms, the everlasting rock against which they shall dash themselves in pieces, and which shall be the holy bulwark of moral freedom.

Assuredly he is a free man who feels himself made in the image of God, and belonging to God alone. His independence towards Cæsar assumes a religious character, and his rights are inviolable because they are founded upon his duties. We shall see Jesus sealing with His blood the rights of conscience, for He was made a victim because He would fulfil the will of God to the uttermost, in spite of the opposition of the representatives of the State. Jesus is the chief of rebels against impious laws. His cross is like the sacred landmark standing between the realm of Cæsar and that of God. His attitude at the bar of the Sanhedrim, and before the procurator's tribunal, is the noblest exposition of His reply to the Pharisees and the Herodians.

We have reserved for this chapter a few incidents belonging to different periods in the public life of Jesus, which are in perfect harmony with the principle He has just uttered in the very stronghold of the theocracy. The indignation so fervidly expressed by Him when James and John desired to call down fire from heaven upon the Samaritans who rejected Him, proves how entirely He repudiated the intervention of force and constraint in purely spiritual

matters. Subsequently, when the impetuous son of Jonas drew a sword to smite the emissaries of the Sanhedrim, Jesus rebuked his zeal with the stern words: "Put again thy sword into its place, for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels."<sup>1</sup> The use of the sword is not interdicted absolutely; St. Paul declares that the prince bears it as the safeguard of justice.\* Jesus was speaking then only of the domain of religion; truth, in its highest personification, in its purest form, repudiates everything which bears the semblance of compulsion, and should heaven itself take up arms in its behalf, it would even then be dishonoured and degraded by the intervention of force. Taking the sword, it descends in a manner from the sphere of its own eternity into that troubled, fluctuating region in which right is with the mightiest, in which all depends on a changing fortune, and the issue of a cause is decided by the breaking of a sword. That which takes the sword perishes by the sword, or at least so it may and so it deserves to perish; there is no guarantee for its security. A divine cause cannot accept such chances and subject itself to such contingencies. Truth may be loaded

<sup>1</sup> Matthew xxvi. 52, 53.

\* "He beareth not the sword in vain, for he is the minister of God; a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil" (Rom. xiii. 4.)

with fetters, branded with insults, treated by men of power as the offscouring of the world ; it retains unblemished its inherent nobleness, so long as, faithful to itself, it fights with no other weapons and uses no other means than those which alone are worthy of it—holiness and love. “I, when I am lifted up,” said Jesus, speaking of His death, “will draw all men unto me.” His only throne was “the accursed tree,” and He was a victor because a victim.

If we go further back in the history of Jesus we see Him, at the time of His return from Syro-Phœnicia, paying the tribute of two pence levied for the service of the Temple. It was on this occasion that the miracle of the stater took place. Peter having cast his net into the lake of Gennesaret, drew out a fish, in the mouth of which was found the little piece of money required by the Jewish tax-gatherers.<sup>1</sup> If it is asked why Jesus, instead of simply paying this tribute like that which was due to Cæsar, works a miracle for so small a sum, the answer is, that this related to His heavenly and not to His earthly citizenship. Now He is king in this region, and cannot acknowledge in the Temple of God an authority higher than His own. This is the explicit declaration He makes to Peter: “What thinkest thou, Simon? Of whom do the kings of

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xvii. 24-27. The miracle here consists in the preternatural knowledge of a fact entirely eluding observation. I do not know on what *a priori* ground it is to be classed among the myths, if it is as well authenticated as the other miracles.



the earth take tribute, of their own children or of strangers? Peter saith, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free." Jesus, the Son of God, cannot be a tributary to the house of His Father. Therefore it is that, consenting to pay the Temple dues in order to avoid a useless scandal, He accompanies the payment with a royal act which asserts His dignity. His conduct, then, is not contradictory to itself. On another occasion, He declined most emphatically any interference in temporal matters. Two brothers came to consult Him on a question of inheritance. "Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" was His reply.<sup>1</sup> On the same principle, when the Pharisees brought to Him a woman taken in adultery, asking Him if she was to be stoned according to the law or not, He placed the question at once in a purely religious aspect, and refused to act as a judge; He silenced the accusers of the unhappy woman with the words: "Let him that is without sin among you first cast a stone at her."<sup>2</sup> It is not that He abrogates the express laws of His people; He knows well that in social order, justice must have its course, but He will not substitute Himself for the competent authorities. His order is the moral and religious, in which the official judges are often lower than the accused; to speak truth, there is in this domain but one judge, and that is God, of whose decisions conscience is the voice. It is to

<sup>1</sup> Luke xii. 14.

<sup>2</sup> John viii. 7.

the bar of the Divine tribunal that He calls the Pharisees, and from it they retire confounded and self-condemned, while the guilty woman receives a word of pardon, which is at the same time a seed of moral renovation. "Go and sin no more," says Jesus to her.<sup>1</sup> This touching scene can only be understood on the principle of a marked line of severance drawn between religion and the State. On any other supposition, the very foundations of social order would be shaken, for public justice would be disarmed by a mistaken application of mercy.

All these deeds and words of the Master, then, point to the entire separation of the two kingdoms, so clearly declared before Pilate in the decisive words, *My kingdom is not of this world*. Thus was the great emancipation of the human conscience inaugurated not by violence, but by gentleness and submission; and spiritual liberty—the mother of all other liberty—received in its very infancy the baptism of suffering.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is well known that the account of the woman taken in adultery is wanting in the oldest manuscripts of the fourth Gospel. It is also evident that it breaks the thread of the narrative between the two passages, John vii. 52, and viii. 12, which are closely connected. Verse 12, which tells us that Jesus is addressing Himself to the Pharisees, is not reconcilable with verse 9, which says that the Pharisees had retired to their homes. If this touching story forms no part of the Gospel of John, it is yet no less authentic in substance. It is clear from the writings of Papias, that it formed part of the earliest traditions of the Church.

<sup>2</sup> A learned writer, M. d'Eichtal, in his book entitled, *Les Evangiles*, Paris, Hachette, 1863, has given an interpretation of

These closing colloquies sufficiently reveal the wilful obtuseness of the priests and doctors. The time was come to lash their pride and hypocrisy before the eyes of the people whom they despised. The accused, raising Himself to His full height, becomes in His turn the accuser; like the hero of the Old Testament, He breaks like tow the interwoven bonds in which perverse sophists have sought to bind Him, and crushes His foes with words more terrible than thunderbolts, which strike sudden light into the dark crevices of their hearts, and tear in tatters the veil of their mendacious pretences. The gaze of the Divine eye is not blinded by wrath; it pierces to the hidden principle and secret roots of Pharisaism. It is not the hypocrisy of Jerusalem alone which is denounced; in this marvellous picture, every line of which is drawn in ineffaceable colours, the Pharisaism of every age sees its own image. Wherever are found formal worship, false devotion, proud scorn of the small ones of the world, inordinate self-estimation; wherever virtue is only a fiction, the holy imprecations of Christ resound with all their solemn severity. It is not offended holiness only which speaks, it is also love—the true charity which cannot suffer that which kills the soul. The true

the famous text, "Render under Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things which are God's," which does not sufficiently maintain the distinction between the two powers, and inclines too much to the side of a Christianity rather social than individual. (See Preface, pp. 4, 5.)

shepherd feels burning indignation against the hireling who leaves the flock a prey to the wolf, or sells the sheep for his own profit. Nothing is further from the comic vein of the satirist, who turns to ridicule the misery and folly of humanity. Ridicule is unknown to compassionate love, for the broad contrasts which are the jest of the scornful, are in truth the token of vast calamities, marking the lamentable disproportion between what we are and what we might have been. Thus we shall find this terrible discourse closing with a tender lament!

From its very first words, the characteristic trait of Pharisaism is brought to the light in a way that cannot be forgotten; saying instead of doing, putting ritual and form in place of feeling, seeming instead of being—this is its essence. “They say but do not.”<sup>1</sup> They bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do to be seen of men. In other words, they play a farce of piety to win applause. Who does not see the Pharisee as Jesus has described him, proudly mounting to his doctoral chair, training his flowing robe, to which he has added fringes of purple, to mark his dignity as a son of Abraham;<sup>2</sup> wearing on his brow those little boxes or phylacteries, within which were inscribed sacred texts; choosing the uppermost seat in the synagogue, and desiring to be called of all men by the venerable

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxiii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Numb. xv. 38.

name of Rabbi? All these fair appearances are but a solemn lie. A lie is that proud claim to open the gate of heaven! Woe to those who enter not in themselves, and who hinder those who are entering in.<sup>1</sup> They have in their hands the key of knowledge, but they use it only to lock up the treasure.<sup>2</sup> A lie lurks in their prayers and pretended charity. "Woe to those who devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers." A lie is their ardent proselytism, for they do not convert, they pervert, and seek not the good of souls but the honour of a sect! A lie is their morality, which sets at nought the word of God by unworthy casuistry and hypocritical traditions! A lie is their devotion, which lays stress only on trifles, which pays scrupulously the tithe of mint and cummin, while it passes by the eternal laws of justice and the love of God. Is not this straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel? All is fair without, but dark within, like the whited sepulchre which covers dead men's bones and all uncleanness. A lie, finally, is their feigned reverence for the saints and prophets of the past. Those who to-day build their sepulchres, had they lived in their time would have slain them, as they will soon slay the new messengers whom God is about to send to them: "Some of them ye shall kill and crucify, and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city; that upon you may come all the righteous

: <sup>1</sup> See for this discourse the whole 23rd chapter of Matthew.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xi. 52.

blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, whom they slew between the temple and the altar.”<sup>1</sup> Truly it was not possible to tear away with a more unsparing hand the mask of false devotion. At heart it hates God, and those who are His, with a hatred which does not stop short of murder. The Pharisee’s long priestly vestment is stained with the blood of the righteous; his interminable prayers scarcely drown the death-cry which is lifted against importunate Truth.

Pharisaism never recovered from the wound it received that day in the Temple of Jerusalem; formalistic hypocrisy, ever since that memorable discourse, has walked the world under a tattered veil. All the judgments pronounced against Jesus in the synagogue fail to counter-balance that terrible sentence with which He branded it, and which He left with it as His last farewell. But this inflexible Judge is no less the merciful Saviour; once again He weeps over the unhappy city as He had wept on His day of triumph; His grief takes tones yet more touching; the familiar image which He adopts expresses the liveliest and most pathetic tenderness. “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. Behold, your house is left unto you

<sup>1</sup> Matthew xxiii. 35

desolate!"<sup>1</sup> Does it not seem as if Jesus already beheld the Roman eagle hovering high in air ready to swoop upon the sacred city, to crush and destroy it in its cruel talons? "I say unto you," He adds, "ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." The demonstration of love has not availed to bring you to believe in Me; the demonstration of punishment will soon lay upon you its constraint.

On this same day, two other scenes of a very different character brought some consolation to the wounded and indignant heart of Jesus. As He was entering the Temple, some Hellenist Jews, who were perhaps only Greek proselytes, sought to see Him; they addressed themselves to Philip of Bethsaida, who brought them to the Master. In these representatives of the nations afar off, Jesus beheld an earnest of the ultimate triumph of His work. "The hour is come," He exclaimed, "when the Son of man shall be glorified."<sup>2</sup> He saw the world opening to Him as the broad field for the Gospel seed; He saw the wide, whitening harvest of souls, but He remembered what a price must be paid for so glorious an issue. Death alone is fruitful. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit."<sup>3</sup> Now this corn of wheat, appointed to death that it may give birth to eternal life, is Himself.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxiii. 37, 38.    <sup>2</sup> John xii. 23.    <sup>3</sup> John xii. 24.

The sacrifice is the condition of the victory. Such words would be readily understood by these sons of Greece, who had probably assisted at the great mysteries of Eleusis, which represented the immortality of the soul under the image of a grain of wheat buried in the earth to germinate. Only Jesus gives a wide extension to the significance of the figure. If a man must needs hate his own soul that he may save it, what will be the cost of the redemption of a world? The chill shiver of approaching death passes over Him, He tastes its bitterness, and passing from joy to sadness with that sensitiveness of impression which bespeaks the full reality of His humanity, He closes the pæan of triumph with a cry of anguish: "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I to this hour."<sup>1</sup> This is the earnest of the soul-agony of Gethsemane. "Father," Jesus cries, "glorify thy name." Scarcely has He given utterance to this unreserved acceptance of the will of God, when a mysterious voice is heard: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." All agitation passes at once from the heart of Jesus. This wicked world, which is about to condemn Him, He sees already judged,<sup>2</sup> and its prince ignominiously cast out, while the cross rises before His eyes as the symbol of His victory, and the sacred magnet which shall draw all men unto Him.<sup>3</sup>

These bold assertions provoke the murmurs of the

<sup>1</sup> John xii. 27.

<sup>2</sup> John xii. 31.

<sup>3</sup> John xii. 32.



Jews; they venture again to ask who is this Son of man? Jesus' only reply is one more appeal to them to profit by the last hours of day yet granted to them. He—the brilliant sun sent to enlighten them—is about to set, and then will come the night.<sup>1</sup> But the calls of the eleventh hour are no more heeded than those of the first, the people persevere in their unbelief; their present blindness is the chastisement of their obstinate refusal of the light, and, according to the terrible oracle of the prophet, their heart is waxed gross, so that they cannot see with their eyes, nor convert, and be healed.<sup>2</sup> The divine word spoken in their midst remains as an accusing witness and a terrible judge. The commandment of Christ was life eternal; degenerate Judaism would not submit itself to it, therefore it chose death. Such, according to St. John, was the conclusion of the public ministry of Jesus. Thus was justified the sorrowful saying inscribed on the frontispiece of the fourth Gospel: "He came unto his own, and his own received him not."

The second consolatory incident of this day affords a touching proof of the individual character of true religion; for even among a people who in their national character have cut themselves off from the kingdom of God, He yet preserves a moral elect, usually hidden and invisible in its obscurity, which does not share in the same condemnation. The Master was on the point of quitting for ever with His disciples

<sup>1</sup> John xii. 35, 36.      <sup>2</sup> John xii. 40.

the desecrated sanctuary. As He passed the treasury, where large chests were placed to receive alms, He saw the rich men casting in their gold with a loud ring that demanded observation; while behind them, timid and trembling, a poor woman cast in the two mites which were all her living.<sup>1</sup> It seems as if the last teachings of Jesus had embodied themselves in these two types of piety passing before Him. Nothing could be a stronger expression of the broad contrast He had established between true religion and false. On the one hand was Pharisaism doing its works to be seen of men, and worshipping and serving only itself, under the show of the service of God; on the other hand, the religion of the heart, the religion of love, sweet and lowly charity. The humble offering of the widow is royal in the eyes of Jesus, because she has given of her penury—she has given herself. In the one case, all is pomp and vanity, in the other all is simplicity and truth. “Blessed are the poor in spirit;” unblessed the rich, who are rich in their own eyes. Thus the last public words of Jesus are a confirmation of the first of the beatitudes. The loving soul, which makes itself a willing sacrifice, is the true temple of God, the altar whence pure incense rises to heaven. Compared with this spiritual beauty, what are those sumptuous marble porticoes,<sup>2</sup> which draw forth admiring exclamations

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxi. 1-5.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xxi. 6. See Vinet's beautiful Sermons on the Stones of the Temple.

from the disciples as they pass beneath them? "As for these things which ye behold," replies the Master, "the days will come in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down;" while the holy deed of this poor widow shall endure to those eternal ages, when faith and hope themselves shall cease.

Taking this incident as a starting-point, Jesus unrolls the scroll of the future before the dazzled eyes of His disciples, incapable as they are yet of reading aright its various portents. This solemn converse is held on the Mount of Olives, just as the last fires of day are glowing on the ramparts of Jerusalem.

### III. The Great Prophetic Discourse. Parables enjoining Watchfulness.

In His prophetic discourse, Jesus connects all the partial judgments of history with that final and decisive judgment, which is to close this economy; but there is no marked line of distinction anywhere drawn between impending events and the issues of the last times. The destruction of the theocracy is linked with those final throes out of which will come forth the new earth wherein shall dwell righteousness. Prophecy gives its broad survey without perspective; the destruction of the sanctuary by foreign armies, the precipitate flight of the disciples, the first persecutions of the Church, the appearance of false Christs—all this prophetic painting of the

events which accompany the destruction of Jerusalem is set in a wider picture, which is nothing less than that of the final crisis of human history.<sup>1</sup> These wars, pestilences, and earthquakes; which are but the beginning of sorrows,<sup>2</sup> and this preaching of the Gospel throughout the whole world,<sup>3</sup> which is to be witness to all nations, are so many signs carrying us onward to the last times, no less than the conclusion of the discourse which represents the sun and moon veiled with sudden darkness, the stars falling from heaven, the Son of Man appearing before the trembling tribes of earth, and the elect rising at the sound of the archangelic trumpet.<sup>4</sup>

The truth which comes forth from all these grand images is the certain announcement of Christ's return, and His triumph on this very earth which has rejected Him and which will share in the judgment by one last revolution of the Cosmos. It is not to inflame the imagination of His disciples that Jesus paints the future in such vivid colours. No; but to enforce His last charge to them on the eve of those mighty conflicts which were about to commence. "Watch therefore," He says to them, "that ye may discern the signs of the times, as the husbandman knows that summer is near when he sees the branch of the fig-tree tender and putting forth leaves. Watch, that ye be not surprised and taken unawares, for judgment will smite the earth more rapidly than

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxiv. 15-26.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxiv. 7, 8.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xxiv. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. xxiv. 29-31.

the lightning which cleaves the cloud, or than those waters of the flood which overwhelmed a heedless generation who were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage." "There shall two be in the field; one shall be taken and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill, one shall be taken and the other left."<sup>1</sup> The parable of the Ten Virgins presents, in an impressive form, this solemn charge to vigilance. Woe to the soul which has suffered the pure oil of faith and love to dry up within it! At the midnight cry, "Behold the bridegroom cometh," the unwise virgin will have but a lamp "gone out," and the doors of the heavenly marriage will be shut upon her.<sup>2</sup> The parable of the talents, which differs from that of the pounds, in that it gives the exact proportion of Christian responsibility to grace received, marks in outline the use that must be made of those short and precious hours which precede the awful midnight call.<sup>3</sup> The prophetic discourse closes with a sublime representation of the supreme court of heaven, before the bar of which every one shall be judged by Him who "tries the reins and the heart."<sup>4</sup> In vain does mocking scepticism jeer at this high decree; it cannot still the terrors of conscience. After all, the doctrine of rewards and punishments is inseparable from the very conception of justice.

Under what impressions of holy awe and ardent

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxiv. 7-41.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxv. 1-14.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xxv. 14-31.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. xxv. 31-46.

hope must the disciples have returned to Bethany that evening, when they left the green slope of Olivet, from which they had seen the scroll of the world's history unfolded beneath the awful light of Divine justice.

The public ministry of Jesus is over; He will devote to His disciples the few last hours which remain before His sacrifice.

## *THE SCENES IN THE UPPER CHAMBER.*

### *I. The Preparation for the Passover. The Last Supper.*

ALL things are now ready. The Sanhedrim hold one last meeting before the Passover, not in their ordinary place of convocation in the Temple, but in the house of the high priest, Caiaphas, to consult on the best means of striking the final blow. These magistrates, high in station, set themselves to plot the death of the innocent, like brigands laying a dark train of violence; they are unanimous in the decision that it will be needful to use cunning to destroy Jesus; they are fully conscious that the deed they are about to commit is a crime, and they prepare for it without any of those false semblances of justice, to which deliberative assemblies generally have recourse in order to deceive themselves. Carried to such a height as this, hatred can no longer wear a mask; its vehemence makes it bold. The intrigues, already commenced with Judas, are resumed; only a final parley is required before proceeding to the arrest. The members of the Sanhedrim desire that all may be completed before the feast, so as to avoid a tumult of the people.

Thus passes the Wednesday.

On the Thursday evening, the eve of the Passover, Jesus sends to bid one of His disciples at Jerusalem

to make ready his house for the celebration of the Paschal supper. Thither He then repairs.

The little company meet in an upper chamber. That humble dwelling becomes the most glorious of sanctuaries, for nowhere in the world has the Divine presence so made itself felt as within those common walls. There is to be sought the cradle of the Church; there the spiritual family appears gathered around its head, receiving from Him consolation and strength, and above all, those mysterious communications of His Divine life, which are to the mystical body what the blood is in our veins. For the first time, Jesus belongs exclusively to His own, and reveals to them how deep and strong may be that holy intimacy between Him and them which is heaven on earth, or rather which is heaven in the heart. He does not receive, as at Bethany, the hospitality of devoted friends; he is Himself the host, and in this last supper enacts the part of the master of the house. Thus, while in the town of Lazarus all the honours were done to Him, here it is He Himself who presides over the meal; the words He speaks are the deepest expression of His Divine love. It is as though He, in His turn, broke the box of precious spikenard over His disciples. "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." These words of John bring to mind the glowing setting of the eastern sun, which reserves for the parting hour its most glorious beams, and empurples the mountains of Judæa before it sinks in night.



Every circumstance tends to lend an incomparable pathos to this scene. We are on the eve of the crucifixion; afar off we hear the rumbling of the city multitude, who to-morrow will raise the death-cry; the disciples are gathered around the Master. He sees them as sheep fallen among wolves, and the traitor is in their midst. In view of anguish and perils unutterable, the pitying love of Jesus flows forth in tender words.

The Feast of the Passover, or of the Deliverance, was marked by that simple and sublime solemnity which characterised the Old Testament worship. The lamb slain for each Israelitish family recalled the deliverance and exodus from the land of slavery on that awful night, when the firstborn of the Hebrews escaped the death-doom which fell upon the Egyptians. Ever since the prophet Isaiah, this meek and quiet victim had prefigured a deliverance of an infinitely higher order. The unleavened bread and bitter herbs symbolised the hasty flight of the chosen people and the hardships of the desert life. Each family assembled all its members. The father, after a short prayer, passed round again and again a cup of wine mixed with water; every time it passed from hand to hand a psalm of adoration was sung. During this ceremony the son of the house asked why the feast was kept, and then followed a short recital of the exodus from Egypt; then the lamb was eaten with unleavened bread. The feast concluded with the passing round of a fifth cup and

with a hymn of praise. The father, at a certain moment, dipped a morsel of bread in the bitter herbs : it was in reference to this ceremony that the Passover was called also "the feast of unleavened bread."

We find the main features of these solemn observances in the repast of the upper chamber. Hardly has Jesus entered with His disciples when He takes the cup, saying, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer; for I say unto you that I will no more eat thereof until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God."<sup>1</sup> These words are the touching expression of a human feeling; it is a friend addressing his friends at the moment of parting from them. But the Son of God is none the less manifest, for at the very moment when He thus yields to the pathos of the farewell, He points to a glorious reunion with His disciples in the life eternal. Then, after the wonted prayer, He passes the cup.

All present stand at this opening of the feast; then comes the moment for them to sit down. The disciples, even in this hour of holy sadness, dispute about the first place by their Master, with an eagerness which springs as much from rivalry as from ardent affection. Jesus brings to their memory that singular order of the hierarchy of His kingdom, which reverses the ranks of human life, and gives the highest place to the lowliest; the Christian is not to be ministered unto, but to minister like his

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxii. 15, 16.

Master.<sup>1</sup> The more deeply to engrave this precept on their hearts, Jesus takes a towel and performs the meanest offices of hospitality, washing His disciples' feet.<sup>2</sup> He makes Himself in reality their servant. How could the disciples desire to reign and rule after such an example? This symbolic act gathers a new significance from the resistance of Peter, who, ever a man of sudden impulses and rapid action, would not consent to this condescension of his Master. He learns first that He must yield an unquestioning obedience, and then that the general purification of the soul obtained by pardon, does not dispense with the daily cleansing; for the pilgrim bound for heaven cannot pursue his journey without the dust of the way cleaving to his feet. "He who is washed needeth not save to wash his feet." But this teaching is only as it were a passing episode; the great lesson of this solemn hour is, that the servants of a God who has humbled Himself should seek their glory in humility and love, and that all pre-eminence should be transformed into generous service.

The disciples, according to custom, take their place on couches around the table. John, in an impulse of sorrowful and anxious affection, leans on the bosom of Jesus. He cannot endure the thought of losing so soon his Divine friend, and his still feeble faith only dimly discerns the future triumph through the darkness of the present. Then the

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxii. 24-26.

<sup>2</sup> John xiii. 4, 5.

Master's voice is heard, saying, "One of you shall betray me."<sup>1</sup> The disciples are filled with astonishment; on a sign from Peter, John asks which of them is capable of so black a crime. Jesus replies that the traitor is he whom He will point out by handing him, according to the order of the Paschal meal, the sop dipped in the bitter herbs. These words are exchanged in an under-tone; none of those present, except Peter and John, know the terrible significance of the act about to be performed. No doubt the reproachful and indignant glance of Jesus is understood by Judas. It is a last appeal—the decisive hour of his destiny is come; there is no middle way for him now between full repentance and a final fall. The unhappy man gives himself up to the devilish powers of which he is now only the tool. "What thou doest, do quickly," said Jesus to him, as He read in his cold resolution that the end was sealed. Judas quitted that sacred chamber to go and close his bargain with the Sanhedrim. "It was night," adds St. John, establishing a kind of parallel between that soul in which the last spark of good had just been extinguished, and the darkness of the world without.

With the departure of the traitor a weight seems lifted from all hearts. Jesus speaks of the glory which awaits Him, which is also the glory of His Father. He points to His death by these words: "Little children, yet a little while I am with you.

<sup>1</sup> Matthew xxvi. 21.

A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another."<sup>1</sup> The moment is come for the institution of the great sacrament of love. Still conforming to the customary usages of the feast, Jesus takes unleavened bread and distributes it, saying, "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me."<sup>2</sup> The second cup, blessed by the master of the house, becomes the solemn token of His blood shed for the world. "This cup," said He, "is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you."<sup>3</sup> The meaning of these words, which have aroused so much stormy controversy, is simple and clear. The bread and the wine of the first Eucharist could not by any possibility contain the very body and very blood of the Christ, seated at the table and Himself dispensing them. We are thus shut up to a symbolic meaning, but the symbol contains a living and spiritual reality. To ask and to take the solemn tokens of redemption, is to confess before the world and before the Church, faith in this great fact, and a resolve, like St. Paul's, "to know nothing among men save Jesus Christ and him crucified;" it is to express a desire after a moral assimilation of His Divine life as real as the physical assimilation which transmutes the material bread into a part of our very substance; and as in the order of Christianity, to ask is to receive, the disciple who participates in this sacred feast, obtains a glorious confirmation of

<sup>1</sup> John xiii. 33, 34.<sup>2</sup> Luke xxii. 19.<sup>3</sup> Luke xxii. 20.

his faith in exchange for his feeble testimony, for Christ gives Himself to the penitent and believing soul. At the table of the Lord's supper, man and God meet together—man with his best aspirations, God with His richest gifts. The Eucharist is the most solemn and most intense expression of the need of salvation, and is, in consequence, the most real communication of the Divine life. It concentrates and unites all the elements of piety, and may be called the sacrament of the Christian life. Yet more, it is also the mystical feast of the Church, blending all hearts in one common adoration. The sacred memorial of the free pardon of God, it brings with it the spirit of pardon and of mercy. This holy table is the meeting-point between the mighty love which comes down from heaven, and the humble and fervent love which rises from earth. There is no need to seek in it any other mystery than the central mystery of the Gospel. It is to misrepresent the Lord's supper to make it, not the memorial, but the renewal of a sacrifice which could only need to be repeated if it had been incomplete. Christ did not say, "I will make myself again and again a sacrifice upon the altar," but simply, "This do in remembrance of me." "Nor yet that he should offer himself often," says the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews; "but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hebrews ix. 25, 26.

## II. Warnings and Consolations. The Sacerdotal Prayer.

The bread and the wine vividly typify the approaching sacrifice. This day of trouble will be indeed, in one sense, a day of triumph for Jesus, but how can He forget the sadness and despondency of His weak disciples? They will be shaken by the tempest like corn in the sieve. Jesus foretells their defection. Peter protests with indignation; not having yet learned to distinguish between natural ardour and steadfast faith, he declares that he at least will continue faithful to his Master, and that though all others should be scattered, he will remain firm as a rock. Alas! in this very night, before the cock crow, he will have belied himself! Jesus predicts his denial positively, for He knows that presumption infallibly goes before a fall.<sup>1</sup>

The disciples have no adequate idea of the gravity of the impending crisis. To awaken them to a consciousness of it, Jesus uses the symbolical method peculiar to Him. He addresses them as soldiers about to go into battle. "He that hath no sword," He says, "let him sell his garment and buy one." The apostles take, literally, counsel that was only intended to be figurative, and show Jesus two swords. The petty number of combatants gathered round Him might suffice of itself to dispel such a carnal illusion. Jesus' meaning is simply this: "The hour of peril is come; prepare yourselves to meet it."

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxvi. 34; John xiii. 36, 38.

The last words of the Master fill the disciples with alarm: they feel that indescribable anguish which precedes heartrending separations. And what a separation is this that is awaiting them! No more to see, no more to hear Jesus; to be abandoned to those terrible temptations which He has just foretold; can there be any sorrow like theirs? Jesus seeks to present to them consolation equal to their need, and He puts it with that divine art which belongs only to perfect love.

"Let not your heart be troubled," He says; "ye believe in God, believe also in me."<sup>1</sup> Such is the commencement of this discourse, which is devoted to an enumeration of all His titles to their confidence.

He opens first to them the most glorious prospect: He speaks of that home of the blessed, whither He is going to prepare a place for them. This is to be the sure goal of all their labours and sufferings. "I will come again," He says, "and receive you unto myself." The return of Christ is, in truth, the only efficient consolation for His departure. Where He is, they shall be also; this promise makes heaven to them a *home*; it wears no more to their minds an aspect of vague and terrible immensity. Nor is Jesus to be found again only at the end of the way; He is also the very way itself which leads to God;—nay more, he who hath seen Him hath already seen God. "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you."<sup>2</sup> But He gives them

<sup>1</sup> See John xiv.

<sup>2</sup> John xv. 3.



a yet more immediate consolation. Nothing so raises and rejoices the heart as a great mission, and the work which is appointed to them is one which knows no limit, for they are called to gather the fruits of their Master's labour; they shall do greater works than His, though their works will still be His, as consequences belong to the producing principle. Strength adequate for this sublime mission shall be granted them. The Spirit of God Himself, the Paraclete, the Comforter, shall be their efficient helper, the light of their intellects, the fire of their hearts, the revealer to them of all truth.<sup>1</sup> This Spirit will subdue the world by means of that which seemed to the Prince of this world, the assured pledge of his success. The cross will, in truth, prepare this crowning victory, for the world, in setting it up, will manifest its shameful unbelief in the Crucified. The glory which is to follow His suffering will be the Divine vindication of His name. Finally, the accursed tree will become the pillory in which the powers of evil will be exposed, for they have judged themselves by nailing to it the Holy and Just One. Such is the meaning of those controverted words: "When the Comforter is come he will convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come: of sin, because they believe not in me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father; of judgment, because the Prince of this world is judged."<sup>2</sup> If the operation of the Divine Spirit is wonderful

<sup>1</sup> John xiv. 16, 17.<sup>2</sup> John xvi. 8-12.

without the Church, it is still more wonderful within it. He it is through whom Jesus will dwell in His own. Thus will be realised that touching promise, the precious pledge of an unalterable peace, which the world can neither give nor take away: "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you."<sup>1</sup> The beautiful similitude of the vine and the branches sets forth, in all its intimacy and fruitfulness, the relation which unites the disciple to the Master.<sup>2</sup>

No mere sentiment of enthusiastic and ecstatic affection will suffice, nothing but that holy love which finds expression in obedience. "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."<sup>3</sup> The first commandment of love is love. Doubtless such love as this will imperil ease and earthly happiness. "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you, but all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake." Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come, but when she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."<sup>4</sup> Assuredly it is expedient, as He says, that the Master should go away, since

<sup>1</sup> John xiv. 18.

<sup>2</sup> John xv. 1, 5.

<sup>3</sup> John xv. 14.

<sup>4</sup> John xvi. 20-22.

He will certainly come again, no more clothed in feeble flesh, which confines His presence to one place, but invested with glory and power, so that He can bestow Himself undividedly upon each disciple. Then He will no more need to speak unto them in parables, for the full daylight will have succeeded to the dawn.<sup>1</sup> Well may He who has such promises and such consolations for His disciples, close this pathetic exhortation with words of triumph: "Behold, the hour is coming, and now is, when ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone, and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."<sup>2</sup>

Thus, final victory in heaven at the end of the way, and in the present life a glorious mission with the all-powerful aid of the Holy Spirit, and the continual presence of Christ with His own; sufferings crowned with more abundant consolations and with the peaceable fruits of righteousness; glorious persecutions leading to more glorious triumphs; peace and joy abiding and unutterable;—such is the bequest which Christ makes to His disciples, in these last discourses, so wonderfully adapted to their weakness and sadness, but broken often by their anxious questions. Far from being, as they are represented, an elaboration of transcendental theology, they lend themselves naturally to all the incidents of a free colloquy.

<sup>1</sup> John xvi. 23-28.<sup>2</sup> John xvi. 33.

When the last cup has gone round, and the hymn of thanksgiving has been sung, Jesus, leaving the upper chamber, turns His steps with His disciples to His favourite retreat at the foot of the Mount of Olives. But, before crossing the Cedron, He lifts His eyes to heaven, and utters more than words of consolation. He invokes His Father on behalf of His Church, in that prayer, justly called His sacerdotal prayer, in which, embracing at one glance all its perils, all its sorrows, and all its needs, from that hour to its final consummation, He places underneath it, as it were, "the everlasting arms." To every believer in the invisible world, this prayer must appear the loftiest effort of the human spirit to rise to it. It seems like the steady soaring of the eagle into the eternal light. "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee. As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do; and now, O Father, glorify thou me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."<sup>1</sup> This glory which He asks is, in fine, the full realisation of His work of love; He returns to heaven to carry on there what He has begun in shame and humiliation upon earth. His desires centre on the few disciples

<sup>1</sup> John xvii. 1-5.

who are around Him; they have believed in Him, they have attached themselves to Him. It is for them He prays at this hour, and not for the world, for they are His, given Him by His Father, and won at the cost of so much suffering. "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world. While I was with them in the world I kept them in my name; and now come I to thee. I have given them thy word, and the world hath hated them because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."<sup>1</sup> Their loneliness, their temptations, their dangers, are all remembered. "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." They are the sent of Christ, as Christ is the sent of God, and they are to carry on His work of redemption upon earth. "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth." The Priest of the new covenant thus offers to God in His person the whole of that new humanity which He represents in His sacrifice. It is not only for this handful of disciples that He prays; He sees in them the Church of every age exposed to the same conflicts and trials. He will bear her with Him into His glory, and introduce her, as it were, into the mysterious unity of the Godhead. "That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us. Father, I will that they also

<sup>1</sup> John xvii. 14.

whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory. I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.”<sup>1</sup>

Thus does this prayer of Christ first cover His disciples as with a shield in the day of battle, and then bear them up on mighty wings into the very presence of the eternal glory. The work of redeeming love is only then fulfilled, when, having stooped to the lowest depths to seek the lost, it rises again with the saved into the highest heavens, even into the inaccessible light in which dwelleth God.

<sup>1</sup> John xvii. 24-26.

## THE PASSION.

### I. Gethsemane.<sup>1</sup>

A CROSS the Cedron, just at the foot of the Mount of Olives, was a garden named from an *oil press*. Under the heavy shade of its trees there was unbroken solitude; only the rush of the brook was to be heard; of Jerusalem nothing could be seen but the white sepulchres on the edge of the ravine which overhung the Valley of Jehoshaphat, and the lofty porches of the Temple of Moriah. Here again and again Jesus had sought and found a sure retreat. Thither He goes once more with His apostles. He leaves them at the entrance of the garden, except His three most familiar disciples, Peter, James, and John.

This night in Gethsemane is a veritable agony. Sweat, like great drops of blood, gathers on His brow; three times He falls on His face with the prayer that, if it is possible, this cup of bitterness may pass from Him. But it is not possible, and three times over He repeats that supreme expression of obedience: "Father, not my will, but thine be done."<sup>2</sup> These words, the utterance of His broken but submissive heart, brought salvation to our race,

<sup>1</sup> See Matt. xxvi. 36-46; Mark xiv. 32-42; Luke xxii. 39-46.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xxii. 42.

for by the medium of a sacrifice infinite in virtue, because infinite in holiness, they led man back into the paths of obedience.

At the close of this victorious conflict, an angel appeared by the side of Jesus, a messenger of peace and reconciliation; heaven and earth met together on this spot, watered by the tears and bloody sweat of the second Adam. The soul had overcome in the fulness of its freedom.

At the first dawning of the day—less brilliant than the heavenly light which now flooded the soul of Jesus—a noisy troop crossed the threshold of the lonely garden. It was led by one who knew well the ways of the Master. Judas had promised to point Him out to the rude subalterns who knew Him not. His aid had become indispensable since it had been decided rather to use cunning than violence in striking the great blow, and to avoid all popular agitation. Jesus was to be surprised at a time and in a place in which He was sure not to be surrounded by a crowd, and for this end it was needful to know his habitual retreats. One of His familiar friends could alone supply such information. All was to be done as quickly as possible; the sign agreed upon for the arrest was the kiss of the traitor. “Judas,” said Jesus, “betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?” This reproach awoke his conscience; he drew back affrighted before the quiet majesty of Him whom he had only consented to betray by stifling his scruples. The rude men whom he led became



suddenly conscious of the power of Jesus; terrified and confounded by His Divine dignity, they fell at His feet in spite of themselves. "Be ye come out as against a thief, with swords and staves?" said Jesus. "When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched out no hands against me; but this is your hour and the power of darkness." As soon as they had recovered from their first terror, the emissaries of the Sanhedrim laid hold of Jesus. It was then the impetuous son of Jonas drew his sword and wounded the servant of the high priest. Jesus wrought His last miraculous cure upon this man, and the rash zeal of Peter called forth for the Church that sublime declaration, which sets the might of invincible truth against the power of the sword and of force. "Put up thy sword into thy sheath; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."<sup>2</sup>

Jesus was led back a prisoner into the still silent city. He was brought in haste to the house of Annas, the ex-high priest, and father-in-law to the actual high priest; his house appears to have been adjoining that of Caiaphas. Although dispossessed of the tiara, he had preserved a great influence over the Sanhedrim, which was full of his relations and creatures. Jesus had no more deadly enemy than this cunning head of a priestly family, inured to the intrigues of the Temple, and as a Sadducean and a priest animated with a double hatred to the Saviour.

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxii. 52, 53.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxvi. 52.

His intention probably was to prepare for the solemn audience of the Sanhedrim. He plays in the trial of Jesus the part of an examining magistrate. In the absence of, any clearly defined points of accusation, it was needful to take exceptional precautions to ensure the sentence. Annas asks Jesus of His disciples and His doctrine. Jesus replies: "I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort, and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? Ask them which heard me what I have said unto them; behold they know what I said." Nothing is more irritating to men of passion than calm like this. One of those present strikes the accused in the face. Jesus says meekly: "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?" Such is His attitude under this vile outrage. He does not even betray the natural indignation which on a similar occasion draws an anathema from St. Paul. The distance is vast between the greatest of the disciples and the Master. What majesty is there in such meekness!

As soon as the Sanhedrim could be assembled, Jesus was led away to the palace of Caiaphas. Just as He was leaving the house of Annas, He heard Peter declaring with oaths and curses, "I know not the man." It was his third denial. The first had been uttered in the vestibule of the palace, upon a remark of the portress who recognised him. The

unhappy disciple had then taken refuge in the court, where the servants had lighted a great fire to warm themselves. Another maidservant called forth his second denial. His provincial accent then made him the butt of the raillery of those present, who taunted him as a Galilean; it was on this provocation he uttered the cowardly denial which wounded the heart of his Master. At the same moment the cock crew. Peter remembered the prophetic warning which had so roused his ire, but above all he was melted by that look, full of sorrow and love, which Jesus cast upon him. He went out and wept bitterly.<sup>1</sup> He was to come forth from this depth of humiliation a new man. The fate of Judas was widely different; tortured by the memory of his crime, he threw down in the Temple the terrible wages of his treachery, and then ended his accursed life on the field of Aceldama.<sup>2</sup>

The trial of Jesus was gone through, according to form, in presence of the Sanhedrim, presided over by Caiaphas. The endeavour was to establish, if possible, a ground of accusation which might ensure a sentence of capital punishment from the Roman governor, in whom alone was vested the power of life and death. The sitting was tumultuous. Jesus was arraigned, not before judges but before implacable enemies, eager only to be avenged on Him. In order to give some foundation to the charge of sedition, two false witnesses were brought forward,

<sup>1</sup> Luke xii. 62.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxvii. 6, 7.

who affirmed that they had heard Him say that He would destroy the Temple, and rebuild it in three days. They interpreted these words in the most material sense, to educe from them a design of revolt against the national religion. The high priest himself urged Jesus to disown all claim to divine Sonship. Upon this, He rose to the full height of His dignity. At this decisive hour He did not hesitate to assume, in all its majesty, that title of Son of God, which was about to cost Him His life, precisely because His death would make any theocratic interpretation of it impossible. "What further need have we of witnesses?" exclaimed the high priest, rending his clothes in indignation; "behold now ye have heard his blasphemy." "Then," as St. Luke tells us, "said they, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am." Then said they, "He is guilty of death."<sup>1</sup> The judges sent out the Accused that they might take counsel together. It was during this interval that the menials of the Temple heaped on Him their insults, spitting in His face, blindfolding and smiting Him, and in bitter irony calling on Him to use His prophetic gift and declare who was the smiter.

The Sanhedrim decided to bring Him without delay before the tribunal of the proprætor, who was present at Jerusalem for the feasts. Horrible beyond comparison is this spectacle of the boasted sons of Abraham dragging before a heathen judge

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxii. 70, 71.

the descendant of their kings, the subject of so many aspirations, of so many oracles. He is brought to the prætorium like the vilest criminal, by a fanatical crowd, headed by the chief magistrates of the nation.

## II. Jesus before Pilate.

In front of the prætorium was a court paved with mosaic,<sup>1</sup> where the soldiers on duty waited. The Jews would not cross its threshold, lest they might be defiled by contact with anything profane on the eve of their greatest feast.<sup>2</sup> The governor before whom Jesus appeared was that same Pontius Pilate, of whose policy we have spoken as so ill-judged, in a land agitated by strong religious passions. He was one of those magistrates, by turns yielding and violent, who estimate nothing but force, and seek nothing but their personal interest. Such men are not cruel by nature, but they show themselves ready to sacrifice justice and the blood of the innocent to the meanest gain or the slightest fear; without any fixed principle, they sometimes obey a good impulse, but there is no guarantee for the motive-power of the next hour. Pilate is a worthy representative of a society which has lost faith in religion, in morality, in everything. Up to this day those who have come before him have been all courtiers or men of faction; now for the first time he meets with a living conscience; he is confronted with that moral power against which Rome,

<sup>1</sup> Hence the name Gabbatha. (John xix. 13.) <sup>2</sup> John xviii. 28.

the city of might, has made no provision, and which will snatch from her the world which she thinks she has enchained for ever. The character of Pilate is drawn with marvellous truthfulness in the story of our Gospels. He is a true Roman of the age of Tiberius, without faith in the gods, yet troubled by a dream, a man at once sceptical and superstitious, turning pale at the mere mention of disloyalty to Cæsar, and yet, through the judicial instinct of his race, recovering the sense of justice so soon as he mounts his tribunal. A veritable Epicurean, he manifests impatient disdain at what appears to him a theological quarrel; no charge can be more ridiculous and frivolous in his eyes than one which bears upon religion; he would willingly throw the cause back upon the Sanhedrim, but he soon perceives that this door of escape is closed to him, since the case is one which may lead to capital punishment. He finds himself compelled to proceed with the trial, for, by a shameless equivocation, the enemies of Jesus accuse Him of rebellion against Cæsar for asserting His claim as Messiah. Now it is indubitable that they brought Him to that bar, solely because He had refused to lend Himself to any political action.

Then commenced that examination which brings out so signally the weakness of the representative of the sword when confronted with the representative of truth. Mounted on his seat of honour, robed in his toga, surrounded by his soldiers, the judge

appears to us as the miserable tool of the populace. The Accused, on the other hand, preserves His dignity because He relies on God alone. The free man here is not the proud magistrate; it is the Condemned at the bar. To the fierce invectives of the Jews, Jesus deigns no reply but silence. He does not pay them the honour of exculpating Himself. He will only answer Pilate when He has been assured that his question is not a mere echo of the synagogue.

This first part of the examination was conducted in the outer tribunal, where the governor gave his decisions from an elevated seat, raised upon a richly decorated marble platform. Desirous to inquire more minutely into the case, Pilate retires into an inner hall, which was used for private examinations. There he asks Jesus: "Art thou the king of the Jews?" "Speakest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?" "Am I a Jew?" replies the Roman disdainfully. "Thine own people and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me. What hast thou done?" "My kingdom is not of this world," answered Jesus.<sup>1</sup> "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence." The rough Roman soldier knows not how to conceive of a kingdom which owns no sword to guard it. "Art thou a king then?" he asks. "Thou sayest that I am a king. To this

<sup>1</sup> John xviii. 36.

end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." "What is truth?" replies Pilate, with the smile of that foolish wisdom, which believes only in things visible. He knows no more what is truth than what is justice, and therefore his good-will, based only on a passing impression, will not stand against the popular clamour. He is impressed, however, by the simple majesty of Jesus, and his wife at the same moment sends him a warning message that she has suffered many things in a dream because of the Galilean.<sup>1</sup> Pilate would willingly release Jesus, if he could only devise any means for appeasing the Jews. Tired of their noisy imprecations, he seeks to escape a responsibility of which he feels a vague dread, and sends Jesus to Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee, then staying in Jerusalem for the feast, and who might be regarded as His natural judge.<sup>2</sup> Jesus gives no reply to the questions put to Him in idle curiosity by this vile tyrant. Herod having in vain sought to see some miracle done by Him, delivers Him to the soldiers. These array Him in a white robe and smite Him with their fists; then they bring

<sup>1</sup> This incident confirms the minute accuracy of the Gospel record. The historians of the time tell us that the prohibition issued by Augustus against proconsuls taking their wives into their provinces fell into disuse from the time of Tiberius. (Tacitus, *Annals*, I. 40; II. 54.)

<sup>2</sup> The tetrarch, according to Josephus, was in the habit of repairing to the holy city on the occasion of the solemn feasts. (*Ant.*, XVIII. V. 3.)



Him back to the prætorium, where the final decision must be given.

Pilate tries one last expedient to save the Accused. He proposes to release Him in honour of the approaching feast, conformably to a custom established by his predecessors, of granting an act of pardon to one Jewish prisoner at each Passover. The people, at the instigation of their religious leaders, clamour for the release of a vile murderer named Barabbas, and exclaim in one voice against Jesus, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Pilate sentences Jesus to be scourged, which was sometimes the method of putting the accused to torture, sometimes the preliminary of crucifixion. He hopes that the Jews will feel themselves sufficiently avenged by this degrading punishment. The soldiers treat Jesus with refined cruelty. As if to carry on Herod's horrible mockery, they clothe Him in a purple robe, put a crown of thorns on His brow and a reed in His hand, then scourge Him without pity. When the proprætor brings Him forth to the people, bleeding and insulted, saying: "Behold the man!" the cries of "Crucify him!" rise again with redoubled force. Feeling the case desperate, Pilate says to the Jews: "Take ye him and crucify him, for I find no fault in him." The judge re-enters the prætorium for a moment; he is troubled; the truth flashes a lightning gleam across his heart; he feels that this prisoner is unlike any he has ever known. As though catching a glimpse of His Divine extraction, he asks Jesus:

"Whence art thou?" As Jesus keeps silence, the Roman magistrate asserts his discretionary power. "Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee and have power to release thee?" The only answer he receives is the sublime defiance of the material power by the spiritual. "Thou couldest have no power at all against me except it were given thee from above; therefore, he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin." If Pilate had but listened to his own heart, he would have released Jesus immediately, but his feeble impulses to right were not proof against the pressure from without; conscience alone stands like a rock against the strong floods of an infuriate crowd. Pilate is swayed most of all by that artful insinuation of the accusers: "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend. Whoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar." The Cæsar of his day was that Tiberius, under whom, according to Tacitus, the accusation of treason was almost always fatal.<sup>1</sup> Pilate openly sacrifices Jesus to his interested ambition, knowing that he is condemning an innocent man; in vain is it for him to wash his hands; the stain of blood remains indelible upon his forehead and his name; by his connivance he has given to this awful crime of the synagogue the consent of the heathen world; he has made it the crime of humanity, a crime the awful weight of which rests upon a whole fallen race.

<sup>1</sup> Tacitus, *Annals*, III. 38.

## III. The Execution.

As soon as the condemnation had been pronounced, Jesus was delivered to the soldiery to be led to the place of execution. No punishment equalled in horror and agony that of death by crucifixion; it was only inflicted on the lowest of the people, on slaves or captives of war—those, in fact, who were considered beyond the pale of the law. It was not permitted to sentence a Roman citizen to such a death, for however great might have been his crime, the judges were bound to recognise in him, the dignity of that proud city which respected herself in the least of her children. Crucifixion, entirely foreign to the Jewish code, had been introduced into Jerusalem by the proconsuls. They sentenced to this most shameful death, political agitators and criminals of the lower orders. Crosses had been planted at the same time as the Roman eagles on the soil of Judæa, and were the tokens of a detested rule. But we have already seen how enmity against Jesus overmastered hatred of the foreigner in the hearts of the Pharisees. Thus they did not hesitate to demand for the Galilean a sentence of death, the very thought of which, on other occasions, would have roused all their indignation.

A great procession was formed. The crowd pressed behind the Roman soldiers charged with the execution of the sentence; these were headed by a mounted centurion.<sup>1</sup> The disciples were scattered; some of the pious women who had followed Jesus during the

<sup>1</sup> Mark xv. 39.

days of His ministry, lingered on the skirts of the crowd, ready to seize the first opportunity of giving Him some fresh proof of their holy love. The condemned was preceded, according to Roman custom, by an inferior officer of the prætorium, who bore before him the block of white wood, on which the sentence of condemnation was written in large characters.<sup>1</sup> According to usage the prisoner carried his own cross;<sup>2</sup> but Jesus, worn out by His night-watch of agony, by the long examinations He had undergone, by the cruel treatment and outrage He had received, fainted under the burden. The Roman soldiers, who regarding Judæa as a conquered country, did not hesitate at any time to demand onerous services of its inhabitants,<sup>3</sup> stopped on his way a certain Simon, of Cyrene,<sup>4</sup> coming out of the country; him they compelled to bear the cross of Christ, little dreaming that they were conferring on him the highest of all honours; for what glory can be compared with that of sharing such reproach? The Cyrenian was probably won to Jesus on this day; his sons, doubtless trained under his influence, stood forth subsequently among the distinguished members of the Church of

<sup>1</sup> Suetonius, *Caligula*, 32; Eusebius, *H. E.*, V. I. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Plutarch, *Sernum vind.*, c. IX.

<sup>3</sup> The philosopher Arrian has described, in a few words, these brutal proceedings of the Roman soldiery: "When a heavy task is imposed upon thee," he says, "accept it without murmuring, else thou wilt only receive blows, without being able to help thyself." (Tholuck, *Glaubwürdigkeit*, p. 362.)

<sup>4</sup> A town of Lybian Africa.

Rome.<sup>1</sup> How would this Christian household rejoice to record in their holiest ancestral annals this bearing of the cross for Jesus!

The way which led from the prætorium to the place of execution was not long; it lay to the north-west of the Temple. At the gate of Jerusalem, which opened on this side, rose a little bare elevation called the hill of the skull, or Golgotha; it had been chosen as the place for executions, because, while lying beyond the walls,<sup>2</sup> it was yet sufficiently near the town to allow spectators.

Just as the procession reached the fatal spot, the crowd opened, and Jesus saw close beside Him the group of pious women who had been following; they were accompanied by some Jews who had been the witnesses, perhaps even the subjects, of his miracles; they had not had courage to protest in the prætorium against the false accusation of the Pharisees, but they could not restrain their emotion at this sorrowful moment. Their tears flowed as they beheld the preparations for death. Jesus alone rose above all these things. He would die as He had lived, forgetful of self; that over which He wept in this bitter hour was the woe of the unhappy city which had rejected Him. He knew that these timid friends who offered Him a tardy pity would be involved in the coming catastrophe. "Daughters of Jerusalem,"

<sup>1</sup> Mark xv. 21; comp. Rom. xvi. 13.

<sup>2</sup> The punishment of crucifixion was always inflicted beyond the walls. (Plautus, *Miles Gloriosus*, Act II., Scene IV.)

He exclaimed, "weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children, for behold the days are coming in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps that never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us, and to the hills, Cover us; for if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"<sup>1</sup> In other words, if the innocent and the just are thus treated, how shall it be with the guilty? In fact, many years had not passed away before the Romans could not find room enough on the soil of Jerusalem to set up the crosses on which they put to death the rebel Jews.<sup>2</sup>

The instrument of torture was not of great height, since the lips of Jesus could be reached by a soldier offering Him vinegar to drink from a sponge placed on a reed.<sup>3</sup> The cross was in the form of a T. A sort of block placed in the centre was intended to support the sufferer.<sup>4</sup> The hands, and probably the feet of the crucified, were fastened with nails, after having been tightly bound.<sup>5</sup>

Three crosses were set up at the same time, for two

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxiii. 28-32.      <sup>2</sup> Josephus, *Bell. Jud.*, V. 11, 1.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xxvii. 49.      <sup>4</sup> Irenæus, *Adv. Hær.*, II.

<sup>5</sup> The whole ancient Church applied to Jesus the 16th verse of Psalm xxii.: "They pierced my hands and my feet." No doubt the application was founded on an old tradition. The passage, Luke xxiv. 39, "Behold my hands and my feet," seems decisive on this point. In support of this opinion there are some lines of Plautus. (*Mostell.*, II. 1, 13.)

thieves had been brought from their cell to be put to death with Jesus. The writing placed above the head of Christ, bore in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, the words: "This is the King of the Jews."<sup>1</sup> They expressed the bitter irony of the Roman governor for the subject people, whom he delighted to irritate, even at the moment when against his conscience he was giving them satisfaction. It was a method of avenging himself for the violence they had done to him in compelling him to deliver Jesus to their will. He did not know that this contrast between so low an origin and so glorious a title, which seemed to him only a cause for mockery, was the distinctive character of the new religion, and that there is no higher revelation of the free and sovereign power of the Divine Spirit, than this independence of all the material conditions of greatness. He silences the remonstrances of the Jews with the haughty words, so characteristic of the Roman: "That which I have written, I have written."

The preparations for death are completed; the moment is come to bind the sufferers and nail them to the accursed tree. According to Jewish custom, they offer Jesus a bitter draught, intended to stupefy the sufferer, and to some degree to deaden the agony.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxiii. 38.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew xxvii. 34. We find the following words in the Talmud: "When a man was led out to death, a cup was given in which were some drops of wine mingled with incense, to deaden his sensibility. (*Gemara Cod Sanhedrim.*) Myrrh produced the same effect.

But Jesus will not draw calm and peace from a narcotic. He will win them in full conflict ; His death is to be a free sacrifice, and far from seeking to deaden His moral vigour, He is about rather to gather up all its force. His death is a voluntary immolation. Jesus is at once victim and priest, since He offers up Himself. Thus He refuses the stupefying cup, that He may drink to the last drop the cup of suffering.

The soldiers who act as His executioners fasten Him to the cross ; their countenances bespeak a mixture of scorn and cruel hardness ; they fulfil their task as they have done a hundred times before. In sooth, what care they for the execution of one criminal more or less in a conquered country ? Are they not accustomed to shed blood like water at the command of their generals ? Jesus, self-forgetful even in such a moment, pities the brutal ignorance which hides from the very actors in this dark drama the purport of their deeds. " Father," He cries, " forgive them ; they know not what they do." <sup>1</sup> Thus, even in this hour, which seems to belong to the powers of darkness, love is stronger than hate. The victory is with Jesus, for in pardoning such a crime, He shows how fully love possesses His soul. The very vapours of the pit can bring no alloy to His divine charity ; He loves in spite of all ; those whom He pardons are conquered by this infinite and triumphant love, which, expressing itself in prayer,

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxiii. 34.



is a manifestation of His abiding oneness with the Father. And yet sorrow and shame go on gathering and thickening around Him !

He undergoes the slow and terrible torture of crucifixion, which does not cut life off at a stroke, but exhausts it drop by drop, and produces fearful agony in the nervous system. Wherever His eye turns, He sees only objects of grief and shame. On His right hand and on His left, are the two thieves crucified with Him. At the foot of the cross, the soldiers, using their privilege of sharing the poor spoils of the condemned, are parting His garments among them ; and, blending coarse tavern play with their brutal sport, are casting lots for His seamless vesture.<sup>1</sup> Around the gate of the city is a tumultuous crowd, whose fierce and cruel clamour falls upon His ears. The greater number doubtless watch His agony only as one of those spectacles which amuse the vulgar multitude ; but in the foremost rank are the creatures of the Sanhedrim. These wretches pass before Him, wagging their heads in token of disdain,<sup>2</sup> and casting in His teeth the very words which formed the basis of the false charge on which He had been condemned in the morning. Probably the hirelings, who had borne false witness against Him at the bar of the Sanhedrim, were found again before the cross to which they had helped to bring Him. "O thou that destroyest the temple and

<sup>1</sup> John xix. 23, 24 ; Matt. xxvii. 35 ; Luke xxiii. 34.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxxiii. 39.

buldest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross."<sup>1</sup> The soldiers stupidly repeat taunts which are without meaning to them,<sup>2</sup> which they only know are words of outrage. But it is not enough for the heads of the hierarchy to insult Jesus through their instruments; their hatred burns to find yet more direct expression against the bleeding Galilean. Judges, priests, doctors as they are, men most scrupulous in the observance of forms in common life, they yet join with the rude populace in heaping insult on their dying foe. Nothing is more significant of their furious rage against Him, and of the terror with which He had inspired them. With an infernal refinement of cruelty, possible only to degraded souls, in which evil has taken the gigantic proportions peculiar to religious crimes, they taunt Jesus with His own miracles: "He saved others, himself he cannot save."<sup>3</sup> They cannot find words of irony enough for this pretended King of Israel suffering between two thieves, for this Son of God at the point of death; and they in their turn repeat the mocking cry: "Come down from the cross."<sup>4</sup> Thus, while the pardoning love of Jesus comes forth triumphant from the terrible ordeal of suffering, the hatred of the Pharisees is not disarmed even by the sight of the cross. Their bitter malice is the satanic reverse of the prayer of the victim for his murderers. In truth, the members of the Sanhedrim re-enact at

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxvii. 40.<sup>3</sup> John xix. 36.<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxvii. 42.<sup>4</sup> Mark. xv. 32.

Calvary the scene of the morning; they repeat before the Crucified that which they said to the Accused. Can we wonder? Not for an instant did they act as judges; they were throughout implacable enemies using the brutal right of might.

It would not be possible, however, that in presence of this supreme manifestation of the love of Christ, impiety alone should lift its head. Of the two robbers at His side, one mingled his broken voice with the blasphemies of the Jews; the other, touched by the holy calm of Jesus, and more still by that expression of heavenly love which beamed upon His brow, yielded to that mysterious awe which even Pilate himself could not escape. For the first time he felt himself in contact with perfect holiness, and he beheld it mocked and crucified! Reproving his comrade, he said: "Dost thou not fear God, seeing that thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed, justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds, but this man hath done nothing amiss."<sup>1</sup> Defiled with crimes as he was, his conscience was not dead, and awaking from its stupor, it owned the supremacy of perfect holiness. "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." "This day," replies Jesus, "shalt thou be with me in paradise."<sup>2</sup> A sublime response to the defiance hurled at Him by the scribes! He comes not down from the cross at their challenge, but He hangs there to pardon and save; the pierced hands of the sufferer open heaven to an immortal

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxxiii. 43.<sup>2</sup> Luke xxiii. 40, 41.

soul. Never was His Divine power more manifest than at this hour.

Suddenly, in the midst of the crowd, appeared a little group who had crept through it unobserved. It consisted of three women and one disciple. There was Mary, the mother of Jesus, her heart pierced through with a sword, as the venerable Simeon had predicted ; the depths of her agonised love are expressed in those words of the ancient hymn :

"Et stabat mater juxta crucem  
Dum pendebat filius."

Her sister Mary, the wife of Cleophas, was with her, and Mary Magdalene, who had bathed the feet of the Crucified with her tears, as the other Mary of Bethany had poured over them her precious ointment. The disciple was John, the friend of the Master. With what relief must the eye of Jesus have rested on those faces full of intense and tender sympathy. Possibly Mary and John were better comforters to Him at Calvary than the angel in Gethsemane. But even in that dying moment He did not dwell on that which affected Himself. "Woman," He said to His mother, who was leaning on the beloved disciple, "Woman, behold thy son!"<sup>1</sup>

Two hours had passed since the nailing to the cross. Death was approaching. In the case of Jesus it was not caused so much by the actual suffering of the crucifixion, as by all which had preceded and accompanied it. Thick darkness veiled the light of

<sup>1</sup> John xix. 26.

day; this was the indication not of an eclipse (which was not possible, as the moon was at the full), but of an earthquake. God permitted this coincidence the better to mark the greatness of the event. It was at this extreme moment, when passing through the last unutterable anguish, that Jesus uttered the piercing cry, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani! My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"<sup>1</sup>

The Jews imagined that He was calling for Elias, an idea accounted for by the wide-spread belief that this great prophet was about to re-appear to prepare the way for Messiah. A feeling of terror spread with the deepening darkness. Again Jesus cried, "I thirst."<sup>2</sup> When He had moistened His lips with the sponge dipped in vinegar, which seems to have been at hand for the purpose,<sup>3</sup> He felt that His last moment was come. "Father," He exclaimed, "into thy hands I commend my spirit;" then came the closing utterance, "It is finished."<sup>4</sup> In truth, this death was the great *consummation est* of the religious history of mankind. "It hath pleased the Father," says St. Paul, "by the blood of his cross to reconcile all things unto himself, whether they be things on earth or things in heaven."

At the very moment of Jesus' death occurred the earthquake of which the deepening darkness had been

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxvii. 46.      <sup>2</sup> John xix. 28.

<sup>3</sup> This vinegar was perhaps the *posca*, or bitter draught, that the Roman soldiers carried with them.

<sup>4</sup> Luke xxiii. 46; John xix. 30.

the sign. The veil which divided the Temple sanctuary was rent in twain,<sup>1</sup> as if to declare that the time of a special priesthood had come to an end, and the era of the universal priesthood had commenced. Long-buried bodies of the saints arose and appeared to some of the disciples. Many of the people who were come together, beholding the things which were done, seem to have been struck with awe, and returned smiting their breasts. The centurion who had commanded the company charged to attend the crucifixion, was among the foremost to own himself vanquished, and to exclaim, "Surely this was a righteous man."<sup>2</sup> He had, in truth, never beheld such a spectacle; he had seen his comrades in arms die boldly in the day of battle; he had probably witnessed the reckless temerity of the gladiator giving his life to the sword, but he had never known till that day the heroism of self-sacrificing obedience and the holy grandeur of sacrifice.

In Judæa the crucified were not left for an indefinite time upon the cross. It was the practice to hasten their death, and then to bury them.<sup>3</sup> This usage would be the more strictly observed on the eve of a great feast. The soldiers brake with a club the legs of the two thieves. They would have inflicted the same treat-

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxvii. 51-56.     <sup>2</sup> Luke xxiii. 47.

<sup>3</sup> According to the Roman custom, the corpse was left to rot on the cross, given up to the birds of prey. (Juvenal, 77. Plautus, *Miles Gloriosus*, II. 4-19.) Respect for the mortal remains of man had modified this usage in Judæa. (Josephus, *Bell. Jud.*, IV. 5, 2; comp. Deut. xxi. 22, 23.)

ment on Jesus, but perceiving that He was dead already, they pierced His side with a spear, and forthwith came out blood and water—a circumstance explained by the fact that He had but just expired.<sup>1</sup>

Joseph of Arimathæa obtained from Pilate leave to lay the corpse in his own sepulchre, which was hollowed out in the rock close to the place of execution. He wrapped it in linen and sweet spices, according to Jewish custom.<sup>2</sup> Nicodemus, forgetting his prudence in the solemn sadness of the day, boldly joined himself to Joseph.<sup>3</sup> A great stone was rolled to the mouth of the sepulchre. Mary Magdalene, and Mary the wife of Cleophas, sat weeping beside the tomb where the Lord was laid. The other women, who had followed Him from Galilee, hastened to prepare spices before the commencement of the Sabbath, so that as soon as it was over, they might pay Him the last honours of the dead.

Then, at the request of the members of the Sanhedrim, who feared the body might be taken away, soldiers were set in the garden of Joseph of Arimathæa, to keep a diligent watch.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John xix. 35-57.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxvii. 59, 60 ; Luke xxiii. 50-56.

<sup>3</sup> John xix. 38-42.

<sup>4</sup> Matthew xxvii. 62-66.

## RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST.

### I. The Facts.

WORDS cannot describe the consternation in which the friends of Jesus were plunged, during the long hours which elapsed between the crucifixion and the resurrection. The disciples were assembled, perhaps in that very upper chamber in which had passed the touching scenes of the last farewell, and which still seemed to echo with the voice they thought never to hear again.<sup>1</sup> Nothing was further from their expectation than the resurrection; they imagined that all was ended for earth, and felt nothing but the vast void created by such a separation. Their hearts remained tenderly attached to Jesus, but their love at such an hour could not but be full of sorrow and dismay. They talked together of the things which He had suffered, of the ingratitude of His people, of their own weakness; but His death, considered in itself without the prospect of approaching triumph, was to them a cause of despair. It was as though the great stone of His sepulchre had been rolled upon their feeble faith. They were like men crushed. The pious women who had followed Jesus to the foot of the cross were about to pay Him the

<sup>1</sup> The apostles and disciples were evidently together in one place, for the women brought them the news immediately. (Luke xxiv. 9-23.)



last funeral honours, by bringing the spices which they had prepared by the dying light of the day of crucifixion, and which proved alike their incomprehension of His words and their tender attachment to His person. They waited with impatience the legal end of the Sabbath to complete their mournful task.

At break of day they went to the sepulchre. What a scene awaited them there! The great stone was rolled away, the tomb was empty; two angels in white raiment appeared to them saying: "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, he is risen." Extreme joy overwhelms the spirit like great sorrow; it was hard to these women to pass from utter despondency to surpassing happiness: the sudden transition from dark night to perfect day is not accomplished without a shock. In the first confusion of impressions, trembling with joy and affright, they were unable to carry the great tidings to the apostles. One of them appears to have left the rest as soon as one glance into the rocky tomb convinced her that the body she sought was not there. This was Mary Magdalene, "out of whom Jesus had cast seven devils." She gives herself no time to look closer into the empty grave, therefore she does not see the vision of angels, and believes that His body has been stolen away. Excited at the thought of such a profanation, she runs to tell the disciples. At the first words, Peter and John set out for the sepulchre. John outruns Peter, and stooping down, looks in; Peter, more bold, enters,

and sees the linen clothes lying, and the napkin that was about His head wrapped together in a place by itself—clear tokens that the body had not been violently taken away. “Then went in also that other disciple which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw and believed.”<sup>1</sup>

The other apostles, attaching no importance to what was told them, did not follow Peter and John. The possibility of a resurrection did not enter their minds. Soon after Mary Magdalene had left the other women, Jesus Himself appeared unto them. This meeting dispelled the terror which had sealed their lips as they stood by the empty grave, and they repaired to the apostles, to whom Peter and John had not yet returned. They found them still plunged in deepest grief, and the testimony they brought, so far from being believed, was regarded as an idle tale.<sup>2</sup>

While the disciples were weeping tears of despair, which faith might soon have dried, the Risen Saviour made Himself known to Mary Magdalene in a manner well adapted to dispel all her doubts, for never was stronger proof given of moral identity. She had returned to that sepulchre which was to her the dearest and most sacred spot of earth. The angels who had spoken to her companions were there again,

<sup>1</sup> John xx. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxviii. 9. The appearance of Jesus to these women can only have taken place after the departure of Peter on the news brought by Mary Magdalene.

and put to her the same question as to the rest; she had for only answer the same sad words she had spoken to the disciples: "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." Not even this bright appearance of white-robed angels could distract her an instant from her grief. What was this glorious vision to her? What she sought was the dead body of the Crucified. Suddenly Jesus stood by her, but through her tears she did not, on the first glance, recognise Him; she took Him to be the gardener of Joseph of Arimathæa; and absorbed in her tender, eager anxiety, she replied to the Master's question: "Why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?" "Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." Touching and artless love, profoundly true and human, and atoning for its blindness by its strength! "Mary!" said Jesus, and the cloud was scattered, and she knew the voice which once brought her a miraculous deliverance. It was indeed He, and she fell at His feet, exclaiming, "Rabboni!" Triumphant faith sprung up from the exchange of these two words.<sup>1</sup> But this faith needed yet to be purified. Jesus would be loved henceforth not only as the most perfect friend, but supremely as the Son of God; the era of the invisible Christ was to succeed to the days of the Christ visible, whose look might be returned, whose hand might be pressed. Mary, who but a moment ago

<sup>1</sup> John xx. 11-16.

was so absorbed in anxiety about the mortal remains of her Master, and who was ready at this moment to lavish on Him tokens of an affection too human even in its exquisite purity, was as yet far from this sublime spirituality. She needed to learn that the risen Redeemer stood on the threshold of that exalted region which is only reached by prayer. The *noli me tangere* was a prophetic protest against all the miserable forms, which mistaken devotion has invented in the course of ages. "Touch me not," exclaims Jesus, "for I am not yet ascended to my Father. But go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, unto my God and your God."<sup>1</sup> The piety which is worthy of Christ unites holy reverence with holy familiarity, and does not make a fetish of Him who has inaugurated the reign of the Spirit upon earth.

Mary Magdalene bore her message faithfully, but she was no more successful than her companions in convincing those of the apostles who had not been to the tomb, of the truth of her story.

While the friends of Jesus were finding it so hard to believe the event which ought to have filled them with joy, the Jews, according to the first Gospel, were in consternation at the rumour. The iniquitous judge who had not feared to suborn false witnesses, had no more hesitation in bribing the guard at the tomb; these mercenaries agreed to accuse the disciples of having stolen away the body of the Master

<sup>1</sup> John xx. 17.

in order to declare that He was risen from the dead.<sup>1</sup> A new proof have we here of the powerlessness of mere prodigies to produce any true change of heart. The earth shaken to its foundations, the sepulchre suddenly opened, the appearance of the celestial messengers,—none of these marvellous events had produced any effect on these sordid souls. A few pieces of money could outweigh them all. Terror only startles the spirit, does not subdue its impenitence. Of what avail would it have been, then, for Jesus to show Himself openly to the people who had crucified Him?

The mental condition of the disciples after what they had heard in the morning is perfectly described in the words of two of them, who towards the evening of that great day walk to Emmaus,<sup>2</sup> a little village situated at sixty stadia from Jerusalem, on the borders of the country of Benjamin, at the foot of the hill Mizpeh, the famous abode of Samuel. Perhaps they are natives of that place; perhaps they seek to escape the noise of the city for quiet meditation. Absorbed in their own thoughts, they pursue the lonely way. One thing alone seems certain to them—the shameful death of their Master; what has been told them of the empty tomb, and the visions of angels, has not availed to dispel their grief, or to dry their tears over the ruin of all their hopes. “We thought that it had been he which

<sup>1</sup> Matthew xxiii. 11–15.

<sup>2</sup> Now El-Kubeibeh. (Robinson, III. p. 281.)

should have redeemed Israel; and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done."<sup>1</sup> These words, which express so bitter a disappointment, are spoken to the very One best able to refute them. The two disciples have been joined by a Stranger, who has asked them the reason of their sadness. So far are they from believing in the great miracle of the resurrection, that they do not recognise Him. The veil which covers their eyes begins to fall, while the Master expounds to them in all the Scriptures, the mystery so amazing to the Jews, of glory prepared by suffering and death. Without yet comprehending this lofty teaching, they are profoundly moved, and as they draw near to Emmaus, they press Him to remain with them on the simple plea: "Abide with us, for the day is far spent." When the Master, seated at the same table with them, lifts His eyes to heaven to bless the bread, they hesitate no longer, and as He vanishes from their sight, they exclaim: "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?" Then, as ever, it was the light of the soul which scattered the darkness of the understanding. Now they, like Mary, believe in the resurrection, for they have seen and heard the Risen One. The two disciples, one of whom only is named,<sup>2</sup> at once returned to Jerusalem, feeling indeed that they could not keep to

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxiv. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Cleopas. (Luke xxiv. 18.) Tradition supposes the other to be Luke.

themselves such tidings of great joy. Joy and sorrow, both are shared in the family of Christ. The very foundation of the Church is this spiritual communion.

The two disciples had hardly reached the upper chamber, where their brethren were assembled with closed doors for fear of the Jews, when Jesus suddenly appeared in their midst.<sup>1</sup> Bewildered with surprise and joy, they durst hardly believe in the glad reality, and were ready to suppose it was His spirit. But they were constrained to yield to the force of evidence. "Behold my hands and my feet," said the Master to them. "Handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have." He gave them even more convincing proof, by eating before them a piece of a broiled fish and of a honeycomb. It was indeed Himself. Who could doubt it as those sublime words were uttered: "Peace be unto you. As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." Then He breathed on them and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." This was not yet the great effusion of the Pentecost; but for the Son of God to promise is to give, and there is no hindrance to our supposing a partial communication of the Spirit in this hour. Thomas was absent at the time of this sacred scene, and would not be convinced by the testimony of his friends. "Except I thrust my hand into his side I will not believe." Merciful condescension of Christ! He grants even this demand to His apostle, because He knows him

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxiv. 36.

to be a man of an upright and honest heart, but He mingles a reproach with the unmerited favour. "Thomas, because thou hast seen me thou hast believed. Blessed are they which have not seen and yet believed."<sup>1</sup> Blessed are those who have rested satisfied with a word of Divine assurance, and who have seen with the eye of faith! Thomas speaks for the believers of every age when he exclaims: "My Lord and my God." His is the faith of the primitive Church, the faith of the Church universal, the true apostolic creed, not elaborated in councils or fashioned by traditions, but the spontaneous *credo* of the Christian soul, adoringly uttered on the knees before Christ.

The Apostle Paul mentions one appearance of the risen Redeemer to James, the brother of the Lord.<sup>2</sup> May we not venture to suppose that Mary, the mother of James and of Jesus, felt in that day that the sword which had pierced through her soul was withdrawn for ever? Glorious must have been her consolation after sorrows so unutterable.

Galilee was the great meeting-place appointed for the disciples with the risen Saviour. It was in this favoured scene of His public ministry that He would show Himself to the largest number of them. The Gospels mention two of these appearances in Galilee. The first took place on the shores of the Lake of Tiberias, where He had known some days of glory, in the midst of an enthusiastic multitude.<sup>3</sup> But

<sup>1</sup> John xx. 27-29.    <sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 7.    <sup>3</sup> John xxi. 1-15.



what was such brief, transitory glory, born of precarious popular favour, compared to that which He brought back from the grave, after overcoming sin and death? Seven of His apostles were gathered by the shores of the lake; those of them who had long lived by the fishing craft, and among whom were Peter and John, had spent the night in their boat on the deep, toiling for their daily bread. During all these long hours they had taken nothing. In the morning Jesus stood on the shore; but they did not recognise Him till at His suggestion the net was thrown on the right side of the ship, and enclosed at once a great multitude of fishes. Then John exclaimed, "It is the Lord." Peter, who had laid aside his garment, filled with a wild, fearful joy, threw himself into the lake and swam to shore. The boat was drawn to the strand, and, as in former days, the Master and the disciples sat down to eat together. Peter dared hardly lift his eyes to the face of Him whom he had denied; doubtless he asked himself what right he had to take his place among the apostles of the Lord. Jesus restored him to his office by a word which called forth at once bitter memories and earnest aspirations—a truly Divine word which laid low and lifted up at the same moment. "Simon, son of Jonas," said Christ, "lovest thou me more than these?" Three times this sacred sword, wounding, and saving while it wounded, was plunged into the heart of the disciple, as if to recall his threefold denial, and the debt he

had contracted in the court of the high priest. Three times Peter replied with a full purpose of soul, which was no longer a presumptuous reliance on himself: "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." Restored by his repentance, he was anew invested by the Master with his office: "Feed my sheep; feed my lambs." None is more fit to be the bearer of the message of mercy to men than he who has just recovered from a fall, and has his own sin covered by Divine forgiveness. "Follow me," Jesus said to Peter, repeating the call given long before, on those same shores, at the commencement of His ministry. The disciple knows now what it is to follow a crucified Master; could he have forgotten, he would have been speedily recalled to the reality by the enigmatical words which, in after years, were to find their sanguinary solution at Rome. "When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." This was a prediction of captivity and death for the impetuous son of Jonas. But it was also an assurance to him that he was counted worthy to suffer for Jesus; no restoration to fellowship with Him could be more complete than this. The ardent and confident disciple was warned of his approaching fall; while faithfulness, even to bonds and the cross, was predicated of the contrite heart. Peter would fain know what future is in store for John. "If I will that he tarry till I come,"

said Jesus, "what is that to thee? follow thou me." This saying, wrongly understood, gave rise to the superstitious idea that John should not die; nothing was further from the real meaning of the Master. He would grant no satisfaction to idle curiosity. We are to pass through the uncertain conditions of human life, contenting ourselves with the blessed certainties of eternity. Such was this interview by the Lake of Tiberias; the quiet, peaceful scene of the early days of His ministry is unchanged, but the freshness of morning has given place to the calm glories of the evening hour.

The second appearance of Jesus in Galilee took place on one of the mountains bordering the lake, in presence of a numerous company, for it was doubtless there He was seen by above five hundred brethren at once. He spoke as the Son of God. "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."<sup>1</sup> Thus all national barriers are levelled, for these disciples are sent forth to conquer the whole world. The rite of baptism is instituted. This is neither the baptism of Jewish proselytes, nor that of the Forerunner administered in the name of the coming Messiah; it is baptism in the name of a finished salvation; it is the sacred sign of a renewed life, the sacrament of conversion,

<sup>1</sup> Matthew xxviii. 16-20.

by which we are buried with Christ crucified for us, that we may rise with the risen Christ, as the Lord's Supper is the sacrament of a holy life, which is only conversion continued and confirmed. Now Jesus may ascend to heaven, for He lives in His Church, and through her the work of redemption will be carried on in the earth.

Forty days after His resurrection, the Master took leave of His disciples at Bethany, near Jerusalem. It is easy to perceive from His last words, that the faith He left with them was not a somewhat spiritualised Judaism, but in truth the religion of mankind, with no other limits than the ends of the world. There was no reference in His mind to that kingdom of Israel, which was still the cherished dream of His disciples,<sup>1</sup> but to that kingdom of truth which, through the inspired word of His witnesses, should be established among all nations. "Ye shall receive power from on high, and shall be witnesses unto me to the uttermost parts of the earth."<sup>2</sup> As He spoke these words He was withdrawn from their sight to enter into the conditions of a higher life, free from all the limitations of human existence, a life truly divine at the right hand of the Father in the abode of glory, where He is preparing a place for us.

The ascension, recorded by Luke only, is implied by all the sacred writers, for none of them gives place to the idea that the risen Saviour might die a

<sup>1</sup> Acts i. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Acts i. 8.

second time, which is the only alternative possible, apart from the mysterious fact authenticated by Gospel tradition. The glorification of Jesus commenced from the day when He rose from the grave; His body was no phantom; it retained its reality, since it could be handled and felt, could eat and drink; but it was nevertheless invested with new properties which distinguished it from its former condition. Jesus was not at once recognised by His disciples; He seemed able to transport Himself with strange rapidity from place to place. In the ascension He resumed all the glory which belonged to Him, and in that glory those Divine attributes, by virtue of which He governs His Church and gives Himself by His Spirit to be the life of each believing soul. The ascension was the crown of His work; His final elevation was as needful as His first abasement.

## CONCLUSION.

WE have sought, in the simple narratives of primitive Christianity, the faithful and living image of Christ. Our four Gospels have given us a type of perfection such as the world has never before or since seen equalled. This high ideal is found not as one of those bold generalisations, which are the fugitive and brilliant dreams of the spirit, but in the perfectly simple form of a human life unfolded before our eyes. The great ascetic of India comes forth, with his doctrine of death, from the depths of mysterious forests, and lays hold of the imagination by the very strangeness of his appearance. Not so with Jesus. The humble village in which He was brought up is known to all; He lived the common life of the lower classes of His people; He was despised because He sat at meat with publicans. He sought no *prestige* by extravagant self-mortification, nor did He make any appeal, like Mahomet, to the warlike passions. He bequeathed to His disciples, not the scimitar and its conquests, but the Cross and its reproach. In the conditions of everyday life was displayed that moral perfection which is beyond comparison, because it united all the qualities elsewhere found apart.

Can it be supposed that such a character as this,

so true to humanity in its Divine beauty, is a mere invention of the mind of man? The Christ of the Gospels satisfies at once our aspirations after the ideal, by His perfect holiness, and our deep yearnings after consolation and restoration, by His sufferings and sacrifice. He responds to our greatness and our misery, and therefore He is called the Saviour of the world. Such is our conclusion. If it needed to be established now by fresh arguments, this book would have been in vain; and nothing which we might add would bring conviction.

We will limit ourselves to one further remark. Beside our four Gospels, there is a fifth which has been eighteen centuries in writing: this is the work of Christ among mankind. It bears witness to miracles as great as those of our canonical narratives. The track of His footsteps is seen wherever there has been any real progress in good, in love, in right, in the moral elevation of man. No revolution in the history of the world can be compared with that which placed the Cross as the boundary between two entirely different ages, and which caused to flow forth from the rock of Calvary, a river of life, which though at times troubled in its course, rapidly purifies itself again, and goes on fertilising the most barren soil. On the foundation-stone of our modern civilisation is graven the name of Jesus. It is this, and this alone, which has given to our modern West, its vast superiority and irresistible impulse to progress. We marvel, therefore, at the strange

attempt of those of our contemporaries who, under the pretext of elevating the mind, seek to bring us back to those materialistic doctrines, under the weight of which the East still sleeps its heavy sleep, haunted by impure dreams, and broken by sanguinary struggles.

But we can invoke another testimony even more decisive than the social results of Christianity. The Gospel itself is written in the hearts of Christians ; it is not in their eyes the sacred scroll which preserves the annals of a dead past ; it is for them the renewal of that past, which belongs to the present, and to every age, because it is eternal. This Christ of the Gospels is known to every Christian now in a living and personal relation, as He was known to the sick whom He healed, and the sinners whom He pardoned in Judæa and Galilee. Every one of us who possesses more than a religion of form and habit, has a right to stand up and say, like the blind man at Jerusalem, "Whereas I was blind, now I see." Every one of us, like the disciple in the hour of denial, has been arrested by that look which pierces the heart and conscience, and has arisen at the words, "Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee." The scenes of the upper chamber, at the Last Supper, are daily renewed. Christian worship is nothing else than a mystic communion between the worshipping soul and the redeeming Saviour. Jesus bends over all the beds of sickness and of death where His followers languish ; He enters the dwell-



lings of the poor, to break to them their daily bread. These experiences have gone on from the foundation of the Church ; the Christian heart of the nineteenth century responds to that of St. Peter and St. John. One Divine life flows through this great body like the blood in the veins, and all those who have shared in it, and who share in it still, trace it back to that Jesus who died in the year of Rome 783. For Him the confessors of ages of persecution have suffered and perished, all declaring, like the proto-martyr, that they saw Him with the eye of faith. For Him thousands of heroic hearts in all lands and ages have throbbed and bled, and have made great sacrifices, and sacrifices unknown to fame. In every rank of society, in all stages of culture and civilisation, from the burning sands of Africa to the heart of our brilliant cities, the same results have been produced, and the same hymn of adoration has ascended in honour of the Crucified.

Against the boldest negations, these confessors of every age and condition set this triumphant saying of St. John : " That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you." Assuredly, whatever may be said, we have a right to call in the witness of this fifth Gospel ; it brings weighty confirmation to the four canonical narratives. Idle mysticism let it be called ! To us there are other realities beside those which can be touched and handled ; and we cannot be persuaded that this great accord of Christian souls is founded on either myth or legend.

At the close of this long contemplation of the Divine model on which I have been gazing, in the earnest endeavour to reproduce some of its features, I feel overwhelmed with the sense of my powerlessness. "I would fain, O Divine Son of Mary," to use the words of one of Thy noblest confessors, "feeble as I am, have said something great of Thee."<sup>1</sup> At times I have seemed, in the brief illumination of some blessed hour, to see Thee in Thy Divine Majesty—thy brow radiant with love and grief, and crowned with that spotless purity which has terrors only for the proud, because it is inseparable from Thy sovereign love. I have seemed to see Thee on the shore of the lake Thou lovedst, or in the villages of Galilee, in the midst of that retinue of the afflicted and despised, who formed Thy guard of honour in Thy royal progress of mercy! But when I have sought to fix the holy vision, the pencil has trembled in my unskilful hands, and I have only been able to give a dim outline of that which had bowed me in the dust in adoration before Thee. What are we to describe Thy holiness?

The distance is too great from us to Thee! How can we, from the lowness of our common lives, rise to the inspiration of that life which was consumed by one single thought of love, and which, from its commencement to its close, was one offering to God and man! Plunged in petty vanities and mean ambition, how can we comprehend Thine utter

<sup>1</sup> Justin Martyr.

scorn for human glory, O King crowned with thorns! Upon us falls ~~that~~ word spoken in Thy just indignation: "Ye are from beneath, I am from above." Therefore it is, that for this very work itself, I crave Thy forgiveness. My hope, my consolation is, that Thou wilt surely disperse the clouds with which, in ignorance or weakness I may have darkened Thine adorable countenance, and manifest Thyself plainly to the willing heart in which I may have awakened a desire to know Thee better.







